

BATTLE OF THE BINGE
Streaming's new debate over
how viewers eat up episodes

GLOBAL TV'S RULING CLASS
Secrets of top showrunners,
from India to Israel

PARASITE ... BEST PICTURE?
How changing Oscar tastes could
help South Korea make history

'FICTION MEANS FREEDOM'
Taika Waititi, Kasi Lemmons
and a wild Writer Roundtable

November 25, 2019

THE Hollywood REPORTER



**FIVE YEARS AGO, A MASSIVE CYBERATTACK CRIPPLED A STUDIO,
EMBARRASSED EXECUTIVES AND RESHAPED HOLLYWOOD.
TODAY, MANY OF THOSE WHOSE LIVES WERE DISRUPTED SAY THE
OFFICIAL EXPLANATION IS FILLED WITH TOO MANY PLOT HOLES**

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a dark grey sweater, is sitting at a white table. He is looking out a window with pink curtains, smiling slightly. His hand is resting on his chin. On the table, there is a clapperboard and a silver teapot. The background is bright and out of focus.

“A TICKET TO”

“★ ★ ★

BEST ACTOR
MATTHEW RHYS

BEST PICTURE
YOUREE HENLEY, p.g.a.
PETER SARAF, p.g.a.
MARC TURTLETAUB, p.g.a.
LEAH HOLZER, p.g.a.

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ANNE MCCABE, ACE

BEST COSTUME DESIGN
ARJUN BHASIN

BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN
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JADE HEALY
Set Decorator
MERISSA LOMBARDO

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KALAADEVI ANANDA
Hair Department Head
TONY WARD

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AARON RAFF

BEST ORIGINAL SCORE
NATE HELLER

SALVATION."

NEW YORK
MAGAZINE

★ ★ " THE TIMES

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MARIELLE HELLER

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

TOM HANKS

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

MICAH FITZGERMAN-BLUE
& NOAH HARPSTER

Inspired by the Article
"Can You Say...Hero?" by Tom Junod

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CHRIS COOPER

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

SUSAN KELECHI WATSON

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Robert De Niro is monumental in one
Al Pacino looms like a co
Joe Pesci is so good you want to
Rolling



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of his best roles, nailing every nuance.

lossus in a tour de force.

cheer when he comes onscreen.”

Stone.



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BEST PICTURE

OUTSTANDING CAST IN A MOTION PICTURE

BEST ACTOR — ROBERT DE NIRO

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR — AL PACINO, JOE PESCI

FEATURES

54 Who Really Hacked Sony?

It's been five years since a massive cyberattack crippled the studio, embarrassed executives and dramatically reshaped Hollywood. For many who lived it, the official FBI narrative that the breach was a North Korean scheme to sabotage Seth Rogen's *The Interview* still has a few too many holes in its plot.

60 Writer Roundtable: 'Fiction Means Freedom, and We Have to Fight for That'

Six writers at the top of their game

discuss taking liberties with the truth, the worst job they've ever had and creating characters "who are desperate to be liked."

66 Meet the Showrunners Driving Peak TV Worldwide

International content creators for the small screen are riding a streaming-age wave of demand for locally produced shows that are connecting with audiences from Mumbai to Mexico City — and they don't have to play by Hollywood's rules: "We can imagine almost everything, and then we can see it realized onscreen."

72 Awards Playbook: 'Her Presence Felt Very Alive'

To nail their portrayals of real people, these talents interviewed priests, went undercover as a stripper and trained in acrobatics to immerse themselves in their roles.

76 Making of *The Irishman*

Martin Scorsese brings together (and de-ages) three septuagenarian legends — Robert De Niro, Al Pacino and Joe Pesci — for the biggest “experiment” of his storied Hollywood career.

60

Clockwise from bottom left: Destin Daniel Cretton, Kasi Lemmons, Taika Waititi, Lorene Scafaria, *THR*'s Stephen Galloway, Anthony McCarten and Charles Randolph were photographed Oct. 14 at Line 204 in Los Angeles. Watch moments from the Writer Roundtable at THR.com/video.

ON THE COVER: W: NBC/PHOTOFEST. HO, R, FIRST L, H, D, S, O, N, ? COLUMBIA PICTURES/PHOTOFEST. EA: AMC/PHOTOFEST. SECOND L: FERNANDO LEON/GETTY IMAGES. Y: COLUMBIA TRISTAR PICTURES/PHOTOFEST. A: TRISTAR PICTURES/COURTESY EVERETT COLLECTION. C: MGM/COLUMBIA PICTURES/PHOTOFEST. K: TRISTAR PICTURES/PHOTOFEST. E: KING WORLD/PHOTOFEST. Y: SONY PICTURES ANIMATION/PHOTOFEST



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a grimly beautiful portrait”

THE ATLANTIC

“MASTERFUL
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“AN ABSOLUTELY
STUNNING ACHIEVEMENT
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LOS ANGELES TIMES

“REMARKABLE”

GQ

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30
The Surf Lodge and ArtNews return to Art Basel Miami Beach with a Dec. 5 dinner at the W South Beach hosted by Swizz Beatz and art adviser and collector Lisa Schiff.

38
Danna Stern was photographed Oct. 7 in her office in Tel Aviv.

49
Trask's Alder Sneakers in Horween Chromexcel leather (which takes 89 or so processes over the course of 28 days to perfect); \$195, at Nordstrom.

ON THE COVER
Illustration by Eric Heintz

THE REPORT

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Viacom and Sony are carving out a lucrative (but short-term) strategy with output and library deals rather than taking on the streamers.
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The head of Israeli TV powerhouse Yes Studios on turning "hyperlocal" shows like *Fauda* into global hits.



40 Streaming TV's Binge-Watching Dilemma: 'Burn' Episodes Or Do a 'Weekly Pulse'?

Disney+ bets on a seven-day rollout, Netflix sticks to all-at-once releases and Apple TV+ experiments with both as strategies spark a debate: "There is a bit of a gut-level conversation that goes on about what shows are better suited to which rollout."

42 The Race: Can *Parasite* Break Best Picture Barriers?

Roma came closer to the top Oscar than any international film but had to settle for the foreign feature award. Here's how Bong Joon Ho's hit can make history.

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Glen Basner on expanding his indie banner into TV, theater and podcasts.



THIS WEEK ON THR VIDEO
Jodie Turner-Smith and Daniel Kaluuya join *In Studio* to talk about filming *Queen & Slim*.



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— INDIEWIRE

"LORENE SCAFARIA'S SCRIPT IS WHIP SMART ...
HER DIRECTION MAKES HUSTLERS
AN ABSOLUTELY GORGEOUS MOVIE TO WATCH."

— SCREEN RANT

"CONSTANCE WU IS AN
UNDENIABLE POWERHOUSE."

— SCREEN RANT



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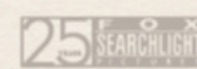
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Legal Streaming Headache

The new data compliance crackdown p. 20

↑ Television Netflix Overseas

Reed Hastings' play in the K-drama market p. 26

Heat Index



Celine Dion

The singer's new effort, *Courage*, heads for a No. 1 Billboard 200 launch with about 120,000 equivalent album units earned in the week ending Nov. 21, per industry forecasters.



Phil Griffin

The MSNBC president oversees the lowest-rated of the five Democratic debates, with the Nov. 20 event drawing an average of just 6.6 million viewers.



Molly Solomon

As NBCU lays the groundwork for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, the executive steps in for the outgoing Jim Bell to lead NBC Sports' production plan.



Robert & Greg Laemmle

After seeking a sale, the father-son team that runs the Laemmle Theatre circuit takes the chain off the market and shuts down the Music Hall Theatre in Beverly Hills after an 82-year run.

Showbiz Stocks



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WORLD WRESTLING ENTERTAINMENT (WWE)

Investors are bullish over the live-event firm's expansion through 2027 of a partnership with the Saudi General Entertainment Authority.



\$7.95 (-9%)

AMC ENTERTAINMENT (AMC)

Some on Wall Street opine that the theater chain could suffer after weak box office results from *Charlie's Angels*, *Terminator: Dark Fate* and *Doctor Sleep*.

Nov. 15-22

The Report

Behind the Headlines



Can't Beat Netflix? 'Arms Dealer' Strategy Paying Off for Viacom

CEO Bob Bakish is carving out a lucrative short-term niche 'renting' IP and inking massive deals (like for *South Park*) with streaming platforms desperate for content: 'It's not a zero-sum game'

BY PAUL BOND AND LESLEY GOLDBERG

In 2013, Nickelodeon pulled its library from Netflix in an attempt to stem its free-falling linear ratings. Now, Viacom's kid-focused cable network has pivoted in the opposite direction: supplying the streaming giant with new film and TV series, including a *SpongeBob SquarePants* spinoff, in a Nov. 13 deal valued at north of \$200 million. And on Nov. 14, Viacom's Paramount unit licensed its long-gestating *Beverly Hills Cop 4* to Netflix rather than risk distributing the **Eddie Murphy** vehicle itself theatrically.

The deals reflect the new reality for legacy media companies that aren't quite big enough to challenge Netflix or Disney with their own direct-to-consumer platforms. Hence, Viacom's so-called "arms dealer" strategy, which

paid off when it sold domestic rights to Comedy Central's *South Park* to WarnerMedia's HBO



Robbins

Max on Oct. 29 in a deal worth up to \$500 million. "It's not a zero-sum game," Nickelodeon president **Brian**

Robbins tells *THR* of the decision to reserve content for its own internal platforms or sell to third-party competitors. "We look at each piece of content separately and through three different lenses: What's the value of that piece of content and how do you maximize it; second is the relationship with the talent; and third is what does it mean to our own platforms?"

To be sure, Viacom's own streaming strategy must be solidified once the company

re-merges with CBS in early December. The \$15.4 billion deal will see Viacom add DTC platforms CBS All Access, BET+ and Showtime to pair with ad-supported Pluto TV and younger-focused Noggin and Nick+.

In the interim, Viacom is focused on making sure brands like Nickelodeon live beyond its linear network. Robbins notes that Netflix is "renting" Nick IP, meaning Viacom will eventually get it back. The streaming pact allows Nick to further monetize programming that doesn't fit on its linear network while leveraging the output of its animation studio. Robbins also notes that originals it produces for Netflix will provide lucrative revenue streams from consumer products and live events.

Illustration by **Lamour**

The Report

Behind the Headlines

Meanwhile, other media conglomerates like Sony also are leaning away from the direct-to-consumer game. Sony TV chairman **Mike Hopkins** says that the company's strategic decision to exit the streaming space has allowed the indie studio to benefit from the demand for originals and library content. In September, Sony TV sold



Hopkins

global streaming rights to *Seinfeld* to Netflix in a deal worth \$500 million. The studio is now shopping library rights to the **Joel McHale** comedy *Community* and soon will shop TV rights to its theatrical films when its current pacts with Starz (for live-action) and Netflix (animation) expire.

"The volume of activity for us increases every week as everyone is ramping up their streaming services," says Hopkins, calling the appetite for content a "gold rush" for the company.

While Sony, as well as fellow streamer-less studios like MGM, are profiting from the demand for content, Viacom's strategy arguably is the most wide-ranging. The company's key streaming licensing deals include *The Real*

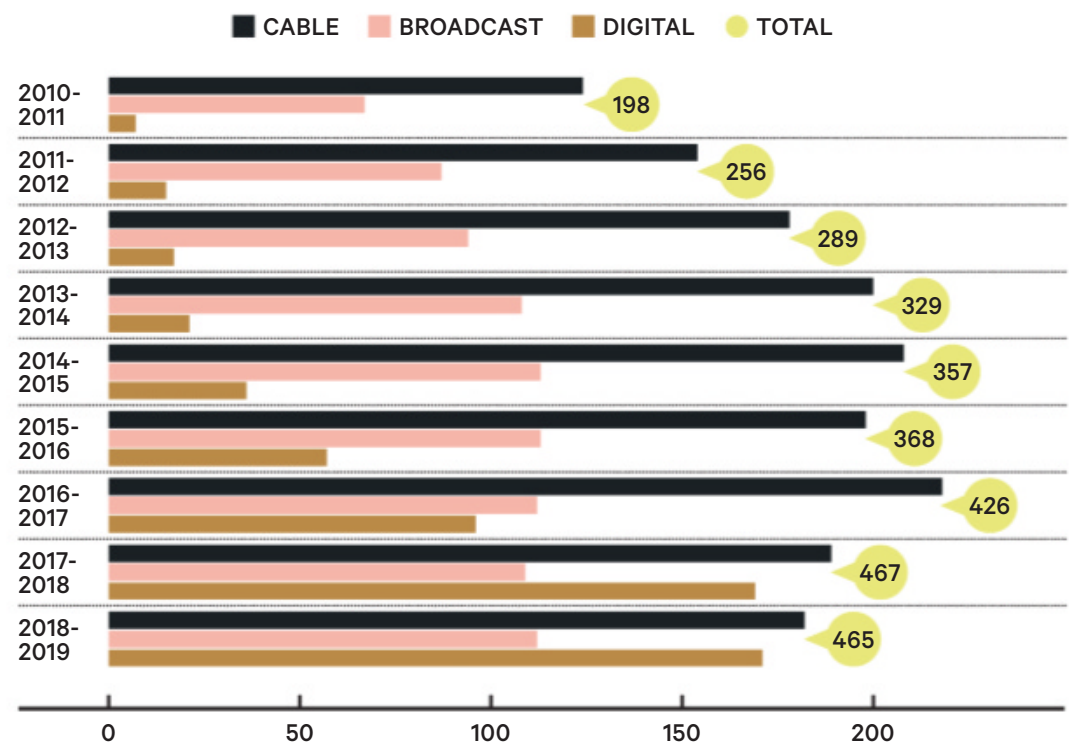
World to Facebook Watch (via MTV Studios); Comedy Central Productions and **Trevor Noah** producing content for Quibi; and Paramount TV supplying hits *13 Reasons Why* to Netflix and *Jack Ryan* to Amazon, among others. However, once the ViacomCBS merger closes, Viacom CEO **Bob Bakish** likely will be pressured to pull back on licensing and supply its internal streamers with originals to better compete with the likes of Netflix, Disney+ and the forthcoming HBO Max and NBCUniversal's Peacock.

"Demand for content from third parties is incredible," Bakish said during a Nov. 14 earnings call. Viacom CFO **Wade Davis** added that when the company sells to Netflix, Hulu and the like, "they are underwriting the budget and they are paying us that budget, plus, call it 20 percent." Then, the licensee owns the show for a certain window or geography and Viacom is free to "exploit the rights they don't own," and eventually, all of the IP reverts back to Viacom.

During the same call, analyst **Richard Greenfield** opined that, if *South Park* were to have been licensed to Viacom's soon-to-be-owned CBS All Access, it would have been its No. 1 show — though Greenfield added that "I actually prefer that arms dealer strategy" of selling content to the highest bidder.

Streamers Replacing Cable

The past two years have seen a surge in production for U.S. live-action scripted series heading to direct-to-consumer digital platforms



Source: FilmLA 2019 Television Report (Oct. 16, 2019)

Bakish's statements represent a change of strategy, as he conceded Feb. 26 that Viacom "took it on the chin" in previous years, leaving money on the table by not licensing bundles of content to Netflix and other streamers. However, he added the previous approach left Viacom with a "warehouse" of rights that went to Pluto TV, the ad-supported service it bought in January for \$340 million and now boasts 20 million users.

Still, keeping content in-house or cashing in with third-party deals is an increasingly common dilemma as AMC, for example, gave its *Breaking Bad* movie *El Camino* a first window on Netflix

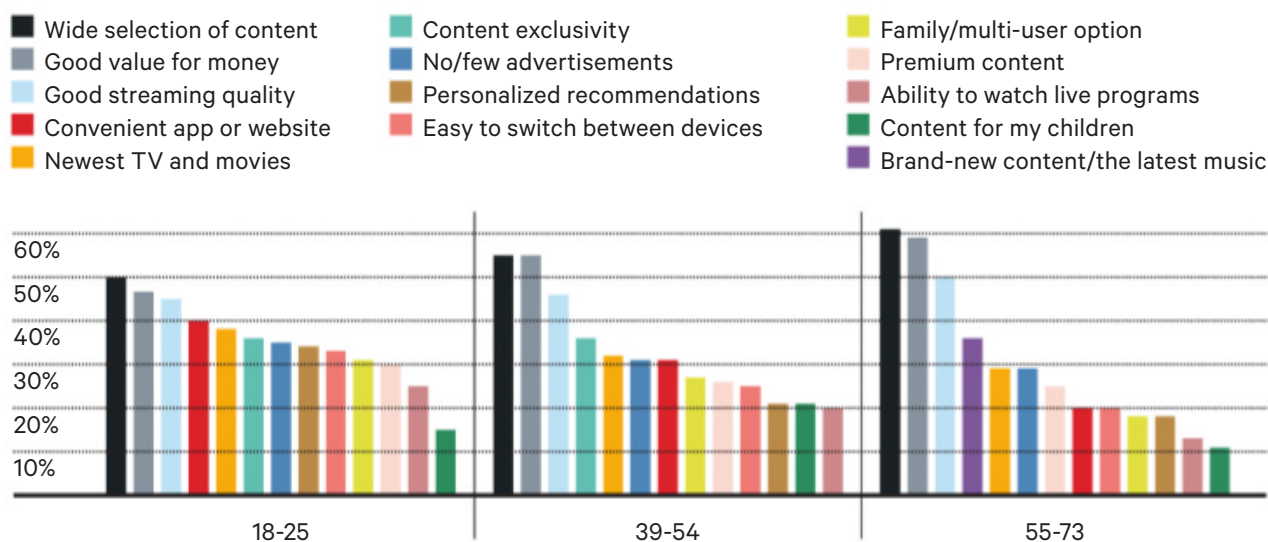
rather than airing it exclusively on its own linear network. Some on Wall Street, like CFRA Research analyst **Tuna Amobi**, have lauded these "hybrid direct-to-consumer strategies," noting that deals with third-party platforms "enhance and/or preserve their upside, as well as mitigate their downside risk." Adds Nickelodeon's Robbins: "We're living in this feverish time right now that you have to be all in with direct-to-consumer platforms, and if you're not, then you're out. And I'm not sure that's correct."

Georg Szalai contributed to this report.

THR Insider: Exclusive Data

What's Driving Streaming Service Signups?

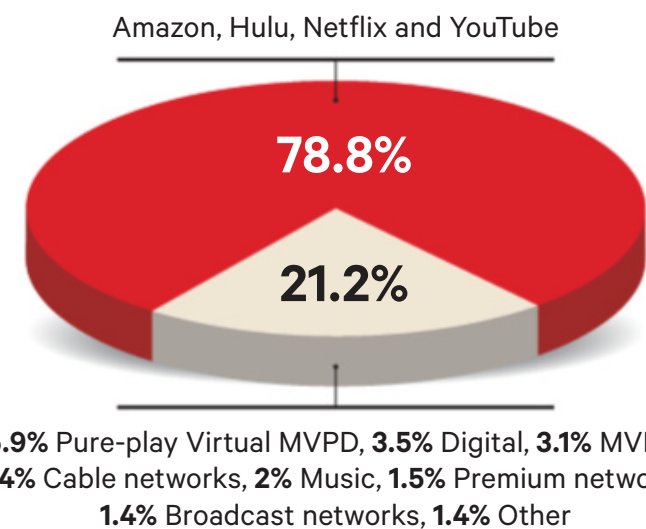
U.S. adults across all age groups place the most value on a 'wide selection' of content



Source: Comscore Custom Survey, U.S. 18+, "State of Digital Services," March-April 2019

'Big Four' Dominate Digital Video Time

Amazon, Hulu, Netflix and YouTube consume the biggest share of viewers' attention



5.9% Pure-play Virtual MVPD, 3.5% Digital, 3.1% MVPD, 2.4% Cable networks, 2% Music, 1.5% Premium networks, 1.4% Broadcast networks, 1.4% Other

Source: Comscore OTT Intelligence, powered by the Total Home Panel, 2019

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‘There’s Never Been a Law Like This in the United States Before’

As Hollywood readies a slew of streaming platforms, California legislation takes aim at those collecting user info: ‘Entertainment companies are going to be targets’

BY ASHLEY CULLINS

You can tell a lot about a person from his or her Netflix queue, and whether the streamer recommends romantic comedies with quirky female leads or historical dramas or British comedies is determined by a viewer’s data — a lot of it.

While the streamers and the rest of Hollywood have been writing nine-figure checks to top talent to attract viewers, a California privacy law going into effect Jan. 1 is shifting their focus to how much information they’ve collected from their users — and who they’re sharing it with. Everything from Warner Bros.’ online Harry Potter shop to ABC’s Freeform app will need to be in compliance.

The law, dubbed the California Consumer Privacy Act, passed in response to concerns that most people have no clue how much of their private data businesses like Facebook and Google possess and how they use it. But the law applies to entertainment distributors too. “A lot of companies are scrambling,” says **Mark McCreary**, chief privacy officer and co-chair of Fox Rothschild’s data security practice. Only 2 percent of affected companies are now in compliance, according to a survey conducted by the International Association of Privacy Professionals this summer. “There’s never been a law like this in the United States before,” McCreary adds.

The CCPA gives California consumers the right to know what personal information a business is collecting from them; the right to know who it shares it with or sells it to; the right to request that a business delete that information; and the right to stop the sale of their info. A business must comply with the CCPA if it has annual gross revenue of more than \$25 million; buys, sells or shares personal information of more than 50,000 consumers a year; or makes more than half its revenue from selling consumers’ personal information. Almost 300 businesses in arts, entertainment and recreation will meet the revenue threshold, and another 12,000 to 18,000 could be affected under the other two

standards, according to an August study by Berkeley Economic Advising and Research that was commissioned by California Attorney General **Xavier Becerra**.

While none of the streamers would comment on the incoming law, a source close to Netflix tells *THR* that since its service is ad-free and its business model doesn’t rely on selling personal data, the company supports the intent behind the legislation.

Conglomerates that operate globally might have a bit of a head start because of the European Union’s similar General Data Protection Regulation, which became

effective in May 2018. But the CCPA is more stringent. While the law becomes official Jan. 1, experts say it’s likely the new rules won’t be enforced until July 1 because Becerra is still finalizing the regulations. McCreary notes that becoming compliant is a “significant undertaking” and estimates most large companies should plan on six to 12 months of work.

Executives and lawmakers might also have different definitions of personal information, says attorney **Rachel Marmor**, who counsels corporations on how they collect and use data. “Business teams often consider data



Becerra

‘anonymous’ if it isn’t attached to a name or address, but CCPA obligations apply to things like device identifiers, IP addresses and cookie data as well,” she says, adding that the volume of data

collected by companies providing content will create challenges in drafting privacy disclosures and responding to access requests. “Many of these services use AI to provide content suggestions to the user — which in turn requires both extensive tracking of what that person has viewed to analyze their preferences and tracking of what others have viewed to analyze what people with particular preferences are interested in,” notes Marmor.

That doesn’t necessarily mean a streamer has to forfeit valuable data about viewing habits, though. In response to a verified request to delete personal data, a business can erase the information, de-identify it or aggregate it. “You can still use that information for research, reporting and deciding which projects to greenlight,” says privacy attorney **Jessica Lee**. “You don’t need to know Jessica Lee liked that movie. You need to know 40 million people liked it.” McCreary agrees, though he notes it’s easier said than done. “If they just want to see how many people watched *Wonder Woman* last month, they can give you a number that has nothing to do with you,” he says. “That information keeps coming in, but there’s no way to tie it back to you.”

Companies also must notify users what info will be collected from them and how it will be used at or before the time of collection, and they must put a “Do Not Sell My Info” link on their websites and/or mobile apps.

The CCPA includes a right to sue for security breaches, which allows courts to award damages of \$100 to \$750 per consumer per incident. McCreary says it will “create a whole new industry for class action lawyers.” Experts agree Becerra is likely to go after companies that make an error affecting many people, like a mistake in a privacy policy. “They’re going to go for the slam-dunk cases,” says McCreary. “The entertainment companies are going to be targets. They have an extraordinary amount of information on their users, and that’s partly how they make their money.” **THR**

\$55B
Estimated cost of initial compliance with the California Consumer Privacy Act across all industries

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DAVID LIVINGSTONE

Best Director
RUPERT GOOLD

Best Adapted Screenplay
TOM EDGE

Best Production Design
Production Designer
KAVE QUINN

Set Decorator
STELLA FOX

Best Costume Design
JANY TEMIME

Best Actress
RENÉE ZELLWEGER

Best Supporting Actor
FINN WITTROCK
RUFUS SEWELL
MICHAEL GAMBON

Best Supporting Actress
JESSIE BUCKLEY

Best Makeup and Hairstyling
Hair and Makeup Designer
JEREMY WOODHEAD

Best Original Score
GABRIEL YARED

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**“ZELLWEGER OWNS THE ROLE FROM THE
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The Washington Post

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RENÉE ZELLWEGER
PALM SPRINGS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



Should Digital TV Expect Razor-Thin Profit Margins?

Despite rosy subscriber forecasts from Disney+ and HBO Max, increased content spending may result in a ‘big shakeout’

BY GEORG SZALAI AND PAUL BOND

While the streaming era is a boon for video consumption, some on Wall Street are worried that distributors won’t be the biggest beneficiaries, with money flowing primarily to content creators. This might spell trouble for new platforms that are already bracing for losses for up to five years.

“Disney+, CBS All Access, Showtime OTT, HBO Max, Starz OTT and Peacock will all likely be among the survivors based on their positioning,” says Cowen media analyst **Doug Creutz**. “However, we also think that current financial forecasts — where they exist — for those networks probably lean toward the aggressive side.”

Liberty Media CEO **Greg Maffei** put a more dire spin on the



Maffei

situation while speaking at his company’s investor day Nov. 21. “OTT will drain each other in a circular firing squad,” the executive said.

A team at Cowen is forecasting that U.S. consumers will spend \$19 billion on streaming services in 2019 and \$41.2 billion in 2024, which represents a 17 percent annual growth rate — seemingly healthy, except

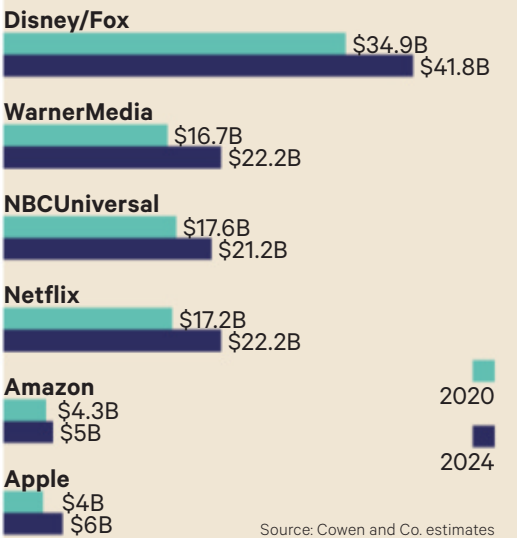
there will be far more services taking slices of that pie.

On the flip side, the money streamers will spend to secure content, per Cowen estimates, will grow from \$116 billion in 2019 to \$144 billion in 2024. “Content creators win with additional money being spent,” notes analyst **Bruce Leichtmann** of Leichtmann Research, “as well as some older content, i.e. a half-billion dollars for *Seinfeld* after years in syndication.”

Disney has already said it anticipates its streamers — Disney+, ESPN+ and Hulu — to be a drag on its bottom line until 2024, and AT&T expects much the same for HBO Max, which debuts in the spring and is expected to bleed red ink until about 2025. Analyst **Steven Birenberg** of Northlake Capital Management predicts, “Streaming will have a big shake-out in a few years, particularly among smaller players.”

Content Spend Forecast

Amid streaming demand, conglomerates are expected to increase annual budgets



Disney Leads in Most Diverse TV Directors

Amid an industry uptick, more than half the episodes produced by the studio in 2018-19 were helmed by women or people of color, a new DGA survey finds

Studio	Total Series	% Female Directed	% Minority Directed	% Female or Minority Directed
Disney/ABC	29	40.1%	29.3%	57.7%
HBO	13	36.7%	26.6%	56%
20th Century Fox	30	34.2%	27.6%	52.4%
Netflix	23	24.8%	33.8%	52.3%
Warner Bros.	43	30.2%	28.3%	50.4%
NBCUniversal	37	31.9%	26.4%	49.7%
CBS	33	26.9%	24.8%	46.6%
Sony	21	26.6%	27.4%	46.1%

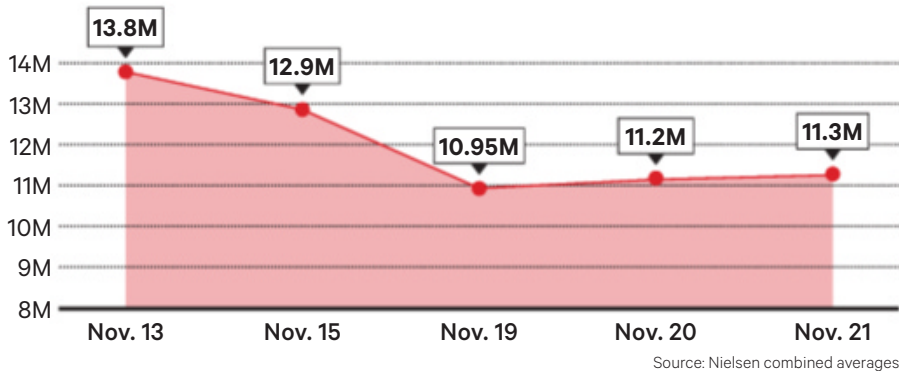
Source: DGA’s Episodic Television Director Inclusion Report (Nov. 19)



Impeachment TV: How Long Will Interest Hold?

Over five days, the hearings averaged 12 million viewers

On Nov. 19, GOP Rep. **Devin Nunes** claimed ratings for the **President Trump** impeachment hearings were “way down” from their high of 13.8 million on opening day. But, while on a downward trend, the hearings have averaged 12 million viewers, slightly below the July 24 **Robert Mueller** hearing (13 million). Fox News was the most viewed outlet, closely followed by MSNBC in the daytime audience race and ahead of CNN and broadcasters ABC, CBS and NBC. — RICK PORTER



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HONEY BOY



**"NOAH JUPE'S PERFORMANCE
IS ASTOUNDING"**
Rolling Stone

**"JUPE STEALS THIS MOVIE,
DISPLAYING RANGE AND
VIRTUOSO WELL BEYOND
HIS YOUNG YEARS"**
Pop Culture

**"AN OUTSTANDING
PERFORMANCE"**
Sight & Sound

**"IT'S AN ENORMOUS
CREDIT TO LABEOUF
AND JUPE... THE
ALCHEMY OF THEIR
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COME SO MARVELOUSLY
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Los Angeles Times

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FEINBERG FORECAST

Premiere Troubles and Triumphs, Spirit Noms and a Duet

Apple's first film is out of the race after misconduct claims against the subject's son as the indie contenders grab the spotlight

BY SCOTT FEINBERG

BEST PICTURE



Richard Jewell
Clint Eastwood's drama was warmly received at its Nov. 20 AFI Fest premiere, thanks in part to **Paul Walter Hauser's** performance. But it was also criticized for its depiction of a female reporter.



The Aeronauts
Amazon may want to offer this epic — reuniting *Theory of Everything's* **Eddie Redmayne** and **Felicity Jones** — more than a brief theatrical release after its Nov. 19 AFI Fest Imax screening wowed.



The Banker
Apple canceled the Nov. 21 AFI Fest gala premiere and delayed the release of the film amid allegations that its heroic subject's son, a co-producer of the film, sexually assaulted relatives.



Waves
A24 dominated Nov. 21's Spirit noms, but its drama by **Trey Edward Shults** — about a black family thrust into chaos — was largely MIA, nominated only for best supporting female (**Taylor Russell**).

SUPPORTING ACTOR



Noah Jupe
Honey Boy
Pundits have been talking about **Shia LaBeouf's** comeback script and supporting turn, but his 14-year-old British co-star had been mostly overlooked as a contender — until landing a Spirit Award nom alongside LaBeouf on Nov. 21.

SUPPORTING ACTRESS



Lolo Spencer
Give Me Liberty
Is the world ready for J.Lo versus LoLo? Spencer, a young first-time actor with ALS who steals scenes in Kirill Mikhanovsky's dramedy, will be competing against *Hustlers'* **Jennifer Lopez** at the Spirit Awards.

ORIGINAL SONG



"A Human Touch"
5B
Dan Krauss' powerful doc about the first AIDS unit in an American hospital is also in the Oscar mix for its end-credits song, which its singer-songwriters, **Jackson Browne** and **Leslie Mendelson**, performed at a Nov. 21 screening at CAA.

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7 Days of DEALS

Who's inking on the dotted line this week

NETFLIX FINALLY GAINS MAJOR Foothold IN K-DRAMA MARKET

Deal of the Week

With several Hollywood studios now hoarding their most bankable IP for their own direct-to-consumer efforts, Netflix is partnering with the rare international content producer that commands a truly global fan base.

The streamer has inked a three-year production and distribution pact with Studio Dragon, one of South Korea's top producers of high-end drama. The deal gives Netflix a content pipeline to build on its budding reputation as a go-to destination for K-drama, which has a devoted and growing fan base in many of the developing markets where the streamer is desperate to expand, such as Southeast Asia, India and Latin America.

"Over the last four years, the market scalability of premium Korean content online has grown dramatically throughout Asia and other parts of the world," says **Vivek Cutou**, executive director of research and consulting firm Media Partners Asia.

Launched in 2016, Studio Dragon has been behind some of the most globally popular recent K-drama hits. Netflix has been licensing its shows since early 2017, but the new pact entails seven series a year, a significant increase in volume, and will include both licensed shows and new Netflix originals that Studio Dragon will develop and produce.

As part of the deal, Studio Dragon's corporate parent, entertainment powerhouse CJ ENM, maintains "the right to sell" a 4.99 percent stake in the TV producer to Netflix. Since the streaming giant launched in Korea in 2016 (it now has 2.4 million subscribers there), several of the country's biggest TV producers — including Seoul Broadcasting System and SK Telecom — have refused to license content to the U.S. company, viewing it as a strategic threat. Local insiders say Netflix buying a stake in a Korean TV producer would help convince the local production community of its aim to be a long-term stakeholder rather than a disruptive interloper. As Netflix's Korea-based spokesperson tells *THR*, "The deal terms related to equity symbolize ... Netflix's [dedication] to working with local creative communities in the long run." — PATRICK BRZESKI



Netflix already owns multi-territory rights to hit period drama *Mr. Sunshine*.



Margot Robbie



Sykes



Klementieff



Ford

opposite Ted Danson in NBC's untitled mayoral comedy from Tina Fey and Robert Carlock.

Juliette Lewis (UTA, the U.K.'s *Troika*, *Untitled*) and **Christina Ricci** (ICM, *Untitled*, Ziffren Brittenham) have joined Showtime plane crash drama pilot *Yellowjackets*.



Hart

Margot Robbie (CAA, *Management 360*, *Jackoway Austen*) and John Wells will executive produce Netflix's straight-to-series dramedy *Maid*.

One Day at a Time's **Gloria Calderón Kellett** (UTA, *Odenkirk Provissiero*, *Felker Toczec*) has signed an overall deal at Amazon.

FILM

The Aviator's **John Logan** (CAA) is writing a Michael Jackson biopic produced by *Bohemian Rhapsody*'s Graham King.

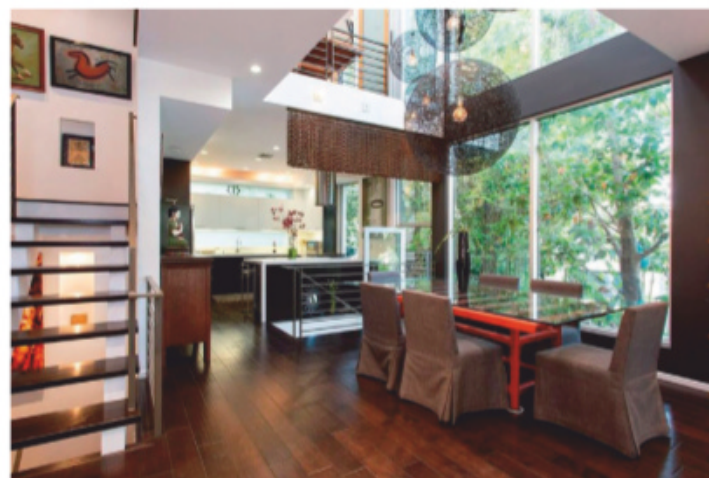
Little Monsters' **Abe Forsythe** (CAA, *Grandview*, *Hansen Jacobson*) will direct MGM's *Robocop Returns*.

Channing Tatum (CAA, *Hansen Jacobson*) and **Roy Lee** (CAA, *Stone Genow*) will adapt cult comic *The Maxx* as a feature or series.

Fargo's **Noah Hawley** (CAA, *McKuin Frankel*) will direct the next *Star Trek* film, with Chris Pine and the rest of the cast expected to return.

John Turturro (ICM, *George Sheanshang*) will play crime boss Carmine Falcone in *The Batman*.

Dexter Fletcher (CAA, the U.K.'s *Independent*, *Sloane Offer*) will helm Universal monster movie *Renfield*, from a pitch by Robert Kirkman.



Awkwafina's townhouse includes a private roof terrace and spa.

Don't Breathe filmmaker **Fede Álvarez** (WME, *Jackoway Austen*) has inked a first-look deal with Legendary, starting with a White House horror thriller.

Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2's **Pom Klementieff** (CAA, *Untitled*, *Sloane Offer*) has joined the

seventh and eighth *Mission: Impossible* movies.

TELEVISION

NBA star **Stephen Curry** (Octagon) and **Will Arnett** (WME, *Artists First*, *Sloane Offer*) will executive produce basketball comedy *The Second Half* for Fox.

Harrison Ford (UTA, *Ziffren Brittenham*) will star in and executive produce Annapurna's adaptation of 2004 true-crime docuseries *The Staircase*.

This Is Us' **Kay Oyegun** (Underground, *Sloane Offer*) has signed an overall deal at Disney's 20th TV.

Holly Hunter (ICM, *Management 360*, *Ziffren Brittenham*) will star

Showtime has renewed *Desus & Mero* and *Back to Life* for second seasons. ... NBC has renewed *Days of Our Lives* for a 56th season. ... ABC has renewed all six of its retro game shows.

DIGITAL

Kevin Hart (UTA, *3 Arts*, *Schreck Rose*) is teaming with Netflix for *Don't Fuck This Up*, a docuseries on the past year of his life.

Zac Efron (CAA, *Alchemy*, *Felker Toczec*) will star in Quibi unscripted adventure series *Killing Zac Efron*.

Kathleen Robertson (CAA, Canada's *NCA*, *Untitled*, *Lichter Grossman*) will pen a female-fronted update of 1994 cult film *Swimming With Sharks* for Quibi.

Idris Elba (WME, the U.K.'s *Artist Partnership*) has joined Netflix's Jay-Z-produced Western *The Harder They Fall*.

Amazon has renewed rookie animated drama *Undone*. ... Netflix has ordered *Vikings: Valhalla*, a sequel to History's *Vikings*, straight to series and renewed freshman zombie drama *Black Summer*.

THEATER

Tony nominee **Ephraim Sykes** (CESD, *Silver Lining*, *Franklin Weinrib*) will play Michael Jackson in *MJ the Musical* on Broadway.

REAL ESTATE

Awkwafina (eXp) has purchased a West Hollywood condo for \$2.3 million.



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“AN ABSOLUTE JOY. ZACK GOTTSAGEN FILLS THE SCREEN WITH A RUSH OF DETERMINATION AND OPTIMISM.”

THE WRAP

“DAKOTA JOHNSON HAS NEVER BEEN BETTER.”

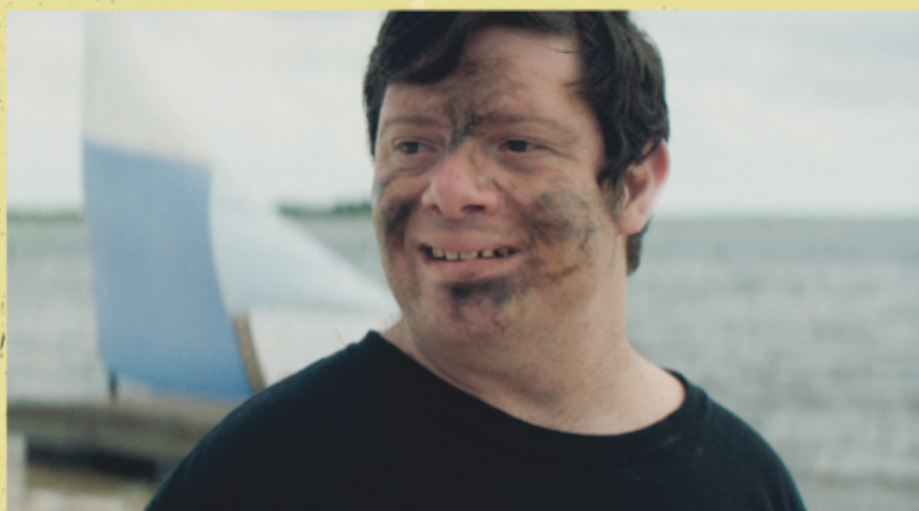
THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

“THIS IS SHIA LABEOUF AT HIS BEST, STRIPPED DOWN TO HIS BARE ELEMENTS AND BOOKENDED BY TWO LUMINOUS PERFORMANCES FROM GOTTSAGEN AND JOHNSON.”

EMPIRE MAGAZINE

“THERE’S A MAGIC TO NILSON AND SCHWARTZ’S VISION.”

CONSEQUENCE OF SOUND



the **Peanut Butter Falcon**

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Best Director TYLER NILSON & MICHAEL SCHWARTZ | Best Original Screenplay TYLER NILSON & MICHAEL SCHWARTZ

Best Actor SHIA LABEOUF | Best Supporting Actress DAKOTA JOHNSON

Best Supporting Actor JOHN HAWKES, BRUCE DERN, ZACK GOTTSAGEN, JON BERNTHAL, THOMAS HADEN CHURCH

Best Original Song “RUNNING FOR SO LONG (HOUSE A HOME)” Written by PARKER AINSWORTH, TYLER NILSON AND MICHAEL SCHWARTZ

About Town

People, Places, Preoccupations



HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

Silicon Valley's Billions vs. Hollywood's Millions

With the tech titans pledging \$4.5 billion to help create affordable housing, how much is the entertainment biz really doing to address the housing crisis in SoCal? 'Leaders have been conspicuously absent' By Peter Kiefer

Over the past five months, Facebook, Google and Apple have collectively pledged \$4.5 billion to help address California's affordable housing crisis, a primary cause of the state's homeless epidemic.

So, how does the entertainment world stack up to Silicon Valley in combating the issue? For a town that prides itself on philanthropy, the answer is startling: Hollywood recently has ponied up an estimated less than 1 percent of the tech-industry pledges.

In March, Disney donated

\$5 million to help fund housing for the homeless in Orange County. A month later, the annual awards gala for L.A. Family Housing, which focuses on permanent housing and sup-



Rich

port services, raised \$2 million; the event marked the 10th year it was chaired by Warner Bros. marketing chief **Blair Rich**.

But some showbiz players active on the issue — L.A. County's homeless population of around 59,000 was up 12 percent in one year — say efforts don't meet the

scale of the issue. "Entertainment industry leaders have been conspicuously absent," says **Gary Foster**, producer of *The Soloist*, which was set on Skid Row, and a board member of social service agency The People Concern. "The world sees L.A. as Hollywood. We need the entertainment industry to step up for L.A."

Rich readily admits that the town hasn't done enough, but adds that "it's not just the industry — it's our city. But there's an unfortunate assumption that the problem is too big, and that's created barriers of entry. People



1 A man in front of a homeless encampment in L.A. in September. 2 Cupertino-based Apple's \$2.5 billion pledge includes \$1 billion to a first-time homebuyer assistance fund.

want to do something, but they don't know what to do."

Hollywood was also conspicuously absent Nov. 13 when Gov. **Gavin Newsom** assembled

About Town

People, Places,
Preoccupations

several dozen business leaders, including Google CEO **Sundar Pichai**, to discuss the role the private sector can play. Not a single person there represented the entertainment industry. A spokesperson for the governor says he has no plans to hold a meeting with Hollywood leaders but that he “invites all industry in California to step up.” But there are signs that many realize much more is needed. A source tells *THR* that **Jeffrey Katzenberg** is turning his philanthropic chops toward the issue (a spokesperson had no comment), while entrepreneur **Jon Vein** says that he’s planning a 2020 summit in L.A. on homelessness.

In October, L.A. County Supervisor **Mark Ridley-Thomas** was the guest of honor at a gathering of about 80 people from the entertainment industry held at the Los Feliz home of Rich and husband **Zev Foreman**, of eOne. A city coroner’s office representative told attendees that, this year, twice as many people died on L.A. streets from homelessness as from homicide. “Blair and I are collaborating on how we reach into the industry,” says Ridley-Thomas, “and tell individuals that it’s not cool to drive past people who are down and out, unless we stop and lift them up. We have to awaken the spirit to accomplish that.” *THR*



Pichai



Left: “The Garden,” by Portia Munson, who will show at the fair’s new Meridians wing. Above: The Pérez Art Museum.

Art Basel Miami Itinerary: An Insider’s Hot-Ticket Guide

UTA’s Fine Arts creative director Arthur Lewis, a longtime attendee of the international art fair — where the scene will include a LeBron retail opening — reveals his tips and must-see exhibits By Ramona Saviss

Art Basel Miami Beach, which runs Dec. 5-8 at the Miami Beach Convention Center, is one of the most dizzying art confabs to navigate, with dozens of satellite fairs, fashion events, private dinners and museum soirees happening around it. This year’s must-score off-site tickets include the Dior Men’s pre-fall 2020 fashion show Dec. 3; the grand opening of **LeBron James’** retail flagship Unknown on Dec. 4 with art installations and a photo studio; and The Surf Lodge pop-up at the W South Beach, which includes a Dec. 5 dinner with *ARTnews*, hosted by **Swizz Beatz** and art adviser **Lisa Schiff**, who counts **Leonardo DiCaprio** as a client. Here’s how UTA Fine Arts creative director **Arthur Lewis** plans to navigate this year’s fair, which includes 269 galleries and a new Meridians sector featuring more than 30 large-scale installations and performances.



Lewis

What are you most excited to see in Miami?

Art Basel Miami Beach is one of my favorite art fairs. I’m excited to view the works of the Rubell

Family Collection’s artist-in-residence **Amoako Boafo** and attend the Pérez Art Museum Miami’s Dec. 5 event featuring singer **Jamila Woods**. I also look forward to viewing [satellite nonprofit fair] NADA and being exposed to new artists. Taking the time to discover new artists and galleries that you don’t already have a relationship with or haven’t discovered is what makes Art Basel great.

What else is on your itinerary?

I wouldn’t miss the Dec. 6 Little Haiti Cultural Center’s event, “The Visual Life of Social Affliction,” featuring artist **Florine Démosthène**, and the Dec. 4 Aperture Foundation “Black Is Beautiful” event [a discussion on issues of race and sexuality] at Soho House.

What do you enjoy the most about going?

Seeing artists who are constantly evolving their practice is something that resonates with me the most. It’s amazing to see how they present new ideas, especially in such a unique environment.

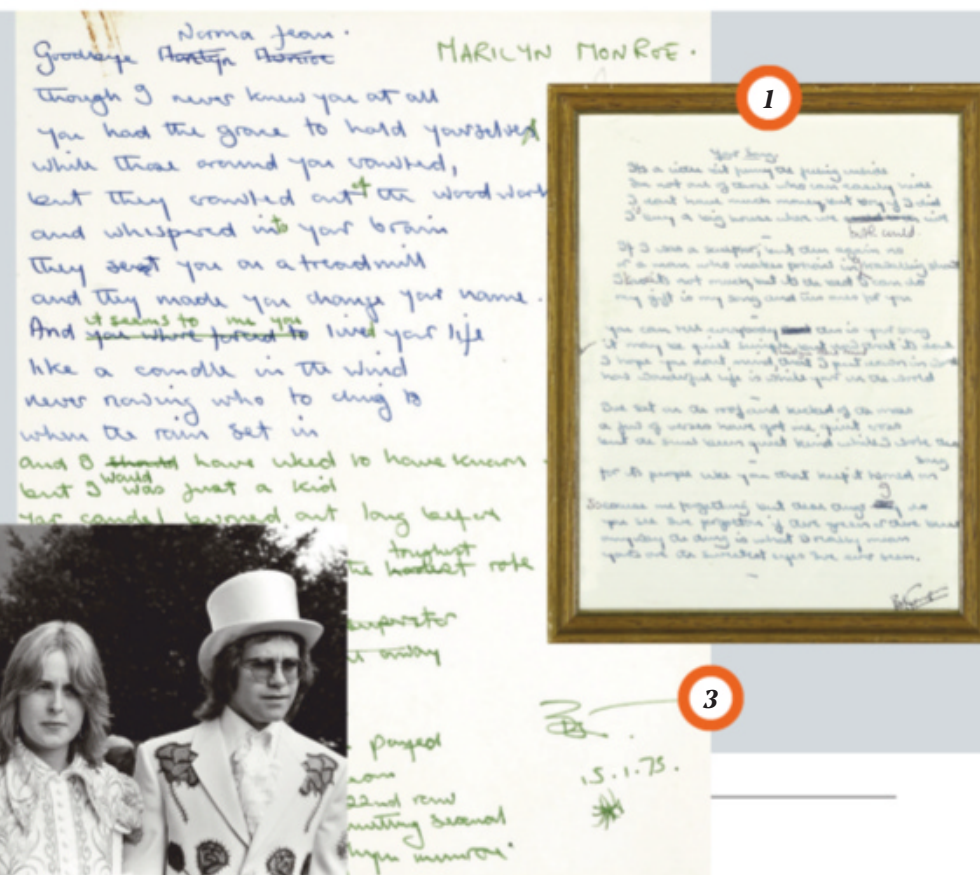
Interview edited for length and clarity.

Bernie Taupin’s First Wife (and ‘Tiny Dancer’ Muse) Selling Lyric Sheets

Music Notes

Blue jean baby. L.A. lady. Seamstress for the band. Sound familiar? **Maxine Taupin** was the inspiration for 1972’s “Tiny Dancer” when she was married to **Elton John**’s writing partner, lyricist **Bernie Taupin**. But while she was never a seamstress, she does recall “sewing these little round patches on his denim jacket,” and she “loved ballet.” On Dec. 9 at Bonham’s in L.A., Maxine — who met the duo on the Sunset Strip in 1970 — will be auctioning off lyric sheets to six of the pair’s songs that she has kept in her personal possession, including “Goodbye Yellow Brick Road.” Says Maxine, “These songs are treasures.” And while she says that she never gave Taupin input on his lyrics even when he asked — “I loved them so much I never suggested any changes” — a retort of hers did inspire one hit song title: “When Elton came back from one tour, he was telling us about what went on, how exhausted he was, and just on and on. I looked over at Bernie and rolled my eyes and said, ‘Ohh, the bitch is back.’” — **TARA BITRAN**

- 1 Lyric sheet for 1970’s “Your Song.”
- 2 Best man Elton John (right) at the Taupins’ 1971 wedding in England.
- 3 “Candle in the Wind” lyrics from 1973.



"FROM MJ RODRIGUEZ TO INDYA MOORE TO DOMINIQUE JACKSON
TO BILLY PORTER, THE BIG CASTING LEAPS PAY OFF IN

AN IMPECCABLE ENSEMBLE"

*The Hollywood
REPORTER*



"BILLY PORTER IS
THE VIBRANT HEART AND
DAZZLING SOUL OF POSE"

The Boston Globe

"POSE SIMPLY WOULDN'T
WORK HALF AS WELL
WITHOUT RODRIGUEZ"

VARIETY

BILLY PORTER
EMMY® AWARD WINNER

MJ RODRIGUEZ

POSE

INDYA MOORE

DOMINIQUE JACKSON

RYAN JAMAAL SWAIN

SANDRA BERNHARD

ANGELICA ROSS

DYLLÓN BURNSIDE

HAILIE SAHAR

ANGEL BISMARCK CURIEL

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About Town

The Red Carpet

Saban Community Clinic Gala

Beverly Hills, Nov. 18



1
Warren Littlefield
and Dana Walden



2
Marlon Wayans (left)
and Ted Sarandos



4
From left: Peter Roth,
Greg Berlanti and
Mark Pedowitz



6
From left: Gary Newman with
wife Jeanne, Orly Adelson
and husband Rick Rosen



7
David
Nevins



9
Ellen Hoberman (left)
and Barbara Marshall



10
James
Corden



11
Andrew Weitz
(left) and *THR*'s
Matthew Belloni



8
Mayim
Bialik



3

Yvonne Strahovski



12

From left: Florence Pugh, AFI's Michael Lumpkin, Alfre Woodard, Jimmie Fails, Scott Feinberg, Cynthia Erivo, Jon Hamm, Awkwafina, Kerry Washington and Sterling K. Brown

AFI Fest

Hollywood, Nov. 14-21



5

Jeffrey Katzenberg (left) and Richard Weitz



13

Anthony Hopkins (left) and Jonathan Pryce



15

Niko Nicotera (left) and Paul Walter Hauser

16

Kathy Bates



14

Sam Rockwell

Party Crawler

Festival Frenzy

AFI's eight-day fest featured premieres at the TCL Chinese of *The Two Popes* on Nov. 18 — when **Jonathan Pryce (13)** spoke of how the sitting pope informed his High Sparrow role in *Game of Thrones* — and **Clint Eastwood's** *Richard Jewell* on Nov. 20. The festival wrapped with a screening of *Marriage Story*, replacing *The Banker*, which Apple pulled amid sexual abuse claims against the son of the real-life subject. AFI also hosted the Nov. 17 Indie Contenders panel at the Hollywood Roosevelt in partnership with *THR*. Moderated by **Scott Feinberg (12)**, the talk presented eight standout performers from 2019 indie films and covered the challenges and rewards of making movies for less than \$22.5 million, which is Film Independent's standard budget to qualify as an independent film. — RAMONA SAVISS

\$2M for Health Care

Hollywood's top TV execs gathered at the Beverly Hilton to fete **Warren Littlefield (1)** and **Greg Berlanti (4)** for contributions to the Saban Community Clinic, which provides free medical care to Angelenos who can't afford it. "There are so many people in need right now," Berlanti said at the 43rd gala. "When you go [to the clinic] and see the depth of what they do and the amount of lives that they touch, anything associated with them is extra special." The evening raised more than \$1.9 million. — ALEX CRAMER



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Yes, I Did Say That!

A look at who's saying what in entertainment
Compiled by Pete Keeley



"I'll do it if Jordan Peele makes it."

SIAN CLIFFORD

The *Fleabag* actress, reacting to tweets that she should play U.K.-born former National Security Council Russia official Fiona Hill, whose testimony in the Trump impeachment hearings included an anecdote about a boy setting her pigtails on fire when she was 11.

"I'm not a Scientologist. I don't have any connection or affiliation with it."

BECK

The musician, in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, disavowing years of rumors about his beliefs. "My father has been a Scientologist for a long time," he added, "but I've pretty much just focused on my music."

"This script is fantastic. Let's get Julia Roberts to play Harriet Tubman."

GREGORY ALLEN HOWARD

The *Harriet* writer, relaying what a studio exec told him 25 years ago as he was first trying to get a biopic made about the civil rights icon.

"Nothing generates more engagement than lies, fear and outrage."

SACHA BARON COHEN

The actor-comedian, accepting an award from the Anti-Defamation League, excoriating social media platforms as "the greatest propaganda machine in history."



"There is no evidence that this ever happened. ... It's offensive and deeply troubling."

KEVIN RILEY

The editor of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, condemning a scene in Clint Eastwood's *Richard Jewell* that implies reporter Kathy Scruggs (who died in 2001) traded sex for a scoop.

"Anyone have experience getting blood out of cashmere?"

PADMA LAKSHMI

The *Top Chef* host, seeking advice from Martha Stewart and others on Twitter after a "truffle hunting" injury.



"I just don't want to be in a situation again where I don't have the control to do what I think is right."

TIM MILLER

The director, on KCRW's *The Business*, explaining why, after bombing with *Terminator: Dark Fate*, he has no plans to work with James Cameron again.

"Would these words ever come out of my mouth? Nope makes no sense."

JON M. CHU

The *Crazy Rich Asians* director, responding on Twitter to a claim by actress Brenda Song that she was discouraged from auditioning because she "wasn't Asian enough."



FLASHBACK!
Did I Really Say That?



APRIL 26, 2018

"The great 20th century art form, the American art form, is reduced to content."

MARTIN SCORSESE

The director, accepting the Robert Osborne Award at the TCM Classic Film Festival, taking a swipe at streamers, on which "every picture, every image is there to be instantly judged and dismissed." On Nov. 27, his \$165 million *The Irishman* bows on Netflix.

BEST ACTRESS

LUPITA NYONG'O

“CHARMING
MENACING
BEAUTIFUL
HIDEOUS
TERRIFIED
TERRIFYING”

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



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DiCaprio and Clooney likely won't star in a *National Enquirer* TV series, but one can dream.

Rambling Reporter

By Chris Gardner

Stop the Presses! A Drama About *The National Enquirer*

Enquiring minds want to know: Is **Roger Birnbaum** developing a TV series about the father-and-son team that invented the supermarket tabloid? Sure as **Elvis** is living on the moon, the veteran producer, along with Arts District Entertainment partner **Eli Roth**, has optioned *The Deeds of My Fathers*, a 2010 family history by **Paul David Pope**, grandson of **Gene Pope Sr.** and son of **Jr.**, who in 1952 purchased a failing paper and renamed it *The National Enquirer*, turning it into the most successful — and continually controversial, including under new owner and **Donald Trump** pal **David Pecker** — gossip rag ever published. “It’s an epic story. Everyone thinks they know what it’s about, but they don’t,” says Pope, 52, who (perhaps wistfully) suggests **George Clooney** and **Leonardo DiCaprio** might be right for the leads. “The story spans a century, so you need [actors] who can come in younger and go older.”

Meet the Hanging Chad of Broward County

Is 26-year-old screenwriter **Chad Klitzman** — who penned Netflix’s 2018 teen comedy *Candy Jar*



Sami Gayle and brother Chad Klitzman.

— gathering material for his next movie? Or is he really running for supervisor of elections in Broward County, Florida? “Voting rights is an issue I’ve been passionate about my entire life,” Klitzman tells *Rambling Reporter* during a road trip through the state, where he and his actress sister **Sami Gayle** (*Blue Bloods*) are visiting election offices. Klitzman grew up in Broward — as a kid he witnessed the hanging-chad controversy of the 2000 presidential election — and ended up graduating from University of

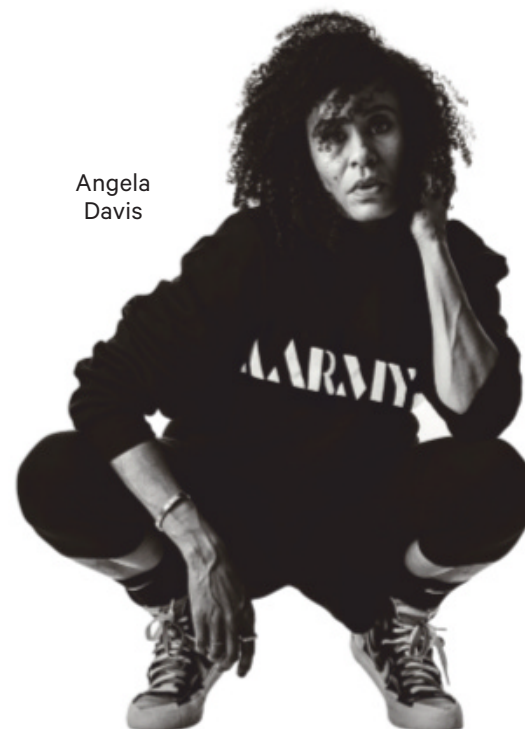
About Town

Heard Around Hollywood

Pennsylvania and earning a law degree from Columbia before turning to Hollywood. But he seems serious about this latest ambition; he filed the paperwork to run Nov. 5 and already has a slogan: “Chad Won’t Leave Your Vote Hanging.”

SoulCycle Star Angela Davis Getting Back in Business

When SoulCycle instructor-to-the-stars **Angela Davis** — she trains **Beyoncé**, **Jay-Z** and **Oprah Winfrey**, among others — resigned in October, there was speculation it was because fitness company owner **Stephen Ross** had hosted a Trump fundraiser in the Hamptons over the summer. Turns out politics had nothing to do with it. “I had done all the growing I could at SoulCycle,” Davis says. “I earned the right to grow.” By grow she means start her own company; she’s teamed with East Coast SoulCycle star **Akin Akman** to launch a “next level” fitness studio, AARMY; the L.A. branch opens in January. And yes, her clients are coming with her: “They are my army.” **THR**



Angela Davis



Iwata



Boxser



O'Keefe

Hitched, Hatched, Hired

Inside the industry’s celebrations and news

Congrats

WarnerMedia Innovation Lab hired **Jeremy Toeman** as vp technology and product and **Matthew Davis** as vp creative on Nov. 18.

Fox Entertainment promoted **Tomiko Iwata** to executive vp head of creative services Nov. 20.

All3Media America hired **Kelsey Boxser** as chief people officer on Nov. 19.

Crown Media tapped **Paul Hodgkinson** as vp human resources Nov. 18.



Abdi Nazemian (left) and Jonathon Aubry

Weddings

Jonathon Aubry, founder of strategic entertainment partnership firm Aubry & Co., married writer, producer and author **Abdi Nazemian** on Oct. 27 at Spago in Beverly Hills, with Busy Philipps performing at the ceremony.

Deaths

James O’Keefe, who produced such sitcoms as *Mork & Mindy*, *Full House* and *Family Matters*, died Oct. 31 of a heart ailment in Los Angeles. He was 76.

Tomas Davison, an international TV executive at MGM Studios, died Nov. 16 in Miami of an unknown cause. He was 43.



Jenner

Power Dining

Bob Iger, **Barry Diller**, **Brian Grazer**, **David Geffen** and **Jimmy Iovine** shared a table at The Palm Beverly Hills. ... **Post Malone** stopped by Mel’s Diner on Sunset. ... **Kendall Jenner** and **Hailey Bieber** enjoyed lunch at Tocaya Organica Sunset Plaza. ... **Kate Beckinsale** was at Hyde Sunset. ... **Larry David** checked out Katsuya Brentwood. ... **Sophia Bush** was at Soho House West Hollywood. On

a different day, **Kevin Bacon** had lunch in the garden. ... Gucci’s **Alessandro Michele** enjoyed brunch at Coast at Shutters. ... **Bob Saget** was at Bandera for dinner. ... **Emma Roberts** lunched at Sycamore Kitchen. ... **Sienna Miller**, director **Charles Sturridge** and APA’s **Manfred Westphal** shared a table at Avra. ... **Goldie Hawn** stopped by A Votre Santé. ... **Carrie Underwood** was at Sushi Roku Las Vegas. ... In New York, **Sarah Michelle Gellar** was at TAO Uptown.

Got tips or submissions? Email rambling@thr.com or hhs@thr.com

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- *Variety*



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THEY ARE SURVIVORS.

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The Business

Creative Space

Danna Stern

The head of Israeli TV powerhouse Yes Studios on turning ‘hyperlocal’ shows like *Fauda* into global hits:

‘We’re making great television for ourselves’

By Scott Roxborough

If anyone has inspired Danna Stern, managing director at Israeli production and distribution company Yes Studios, it was probably her grandmother, Lisa. “She worked, doing shorthand for every Israeli defense minister, until she retired, age 88,” recalls Stern, smiling at the memory.

Perhaps following her grandmother’s stenographic example, Stern started in journalism at age 18, working as a news producer for Israeli Army Radio. That segued into a six-year stint with Reuters Television in Jerusalem. “It was the 1990s, a crazy time,” she says. “I’d wake up to the sound of sirens.” Stern exchanged sirens for series in 1999, joining satellite network Yes TV as an acquisitions exec, but after 18 years of buying U.S. and U.K.-made dramas, the 48-year-old mother of three decided to do it herself. In 2017, Stern took over as managing director of Yes Studios, the company’s production and international sales arm, and dove deep into original production. The political thriller *Fauda*, one of the company’s first drama series (and made for around \$200,000 an episode) became the most watched drama in the history of Yes and was the first Hebrew-language show picked up by Netflix worldwide (season three bows in December). Yes, which has five full-time staffers — all women — currently has three U.S. shows in production based on its Israeli



These *Big Bang Theory* bobbleheads are a tribute to the show: “It’s the last time we’ll see a show run 280 episodes and be a hit everywhere.”

OUI!

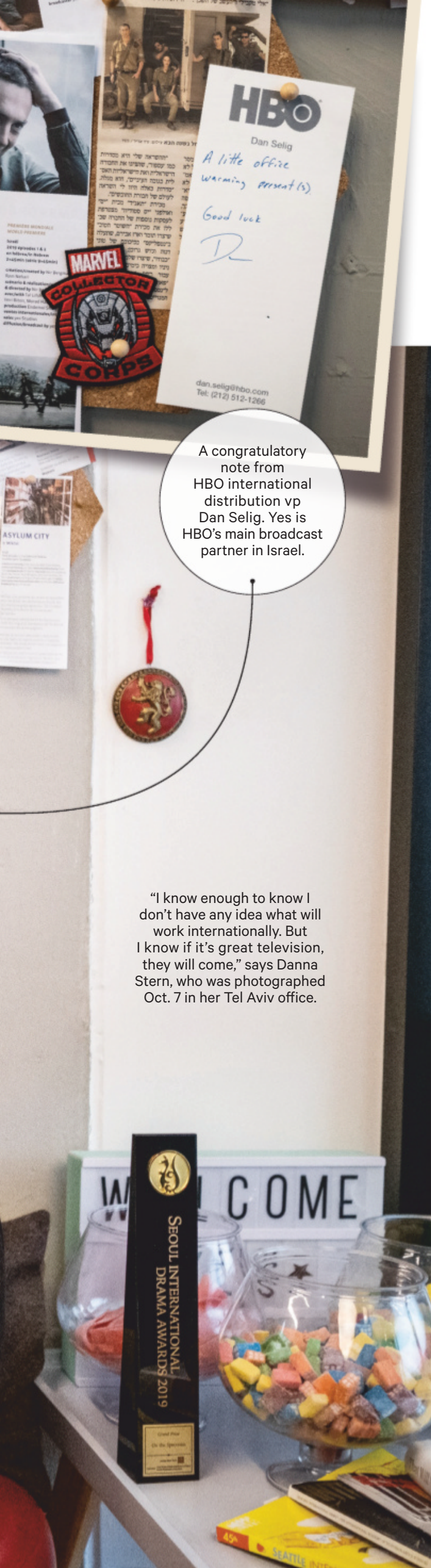
“At other companies, my job was always to say no. So now we say yes to everything,” says Stern of this button on her desk.

originals: Showtime’s version of *Your Honor* with Bryan Cranston; 68 *Whiskey*, based on Yes’ *Charlie Golf One*, which Imagine is producing for Paramount Network; and *On the Spectrum*, a comedy about 20-somethings, all with autism or Asperger’s syndrome, which was ordered to pilot for Amazon. Yes Studios also has

about a dozen international adaptations in the works, including German, French, Italian and Russian versions of *Your Honor* and an Indian take on *Fauda*.

Stern invited *THR* to lunch at Yes Studios’ quiet, tidy offices in Tel Aviv to discuss why international production is booming, what the streaming wars will

Photographed by Ilia Yefimovich



A congratulatory note from HBO international distribution vp Dan Selig. Yes is HBO's main broadcast partner in Israel.

"I know enough to know I don't have any idea what will work internationally. But I know if it's great television, they will come," says Danna Stern, who was photographed Oct. 7 in her Tel Aviv office.

mean for global producers, and why she'll keep betting on first-time writers.

We've seen a consistent wave of Israeli series getting U.S. adaptations, not just your shows but *In Treatment*, *Homeland*, *Euphoria*. Why is Israel so good at TV drama? Well, it's definitely not the money.

But we have a lot of things going for us. This place is crazy in a good way and in a bad way. We live interesting lives. We all have stories to tell. Take [*Fauda* creators] Avi Issacharoff and Lior Raz: They were real-life soldiers, that is their story. A lot of what we do is passionate storytelling from someone who takes inspiration from their own lives.

It's hard to imagine a show like *Fauda* or *On the Spectrum* being greenlit as an original in the U.S. I don't want to diss American television, which I love and which was a good chunk of my life for a long time. We were, and I think we still are, as Yes TV, the biggest buyers of American studio fare [in Israel]. But American TV is a real industry, it's a business first and foremost. The projects that people end up developing and producing and putting on air are the ones they think will appeal to the widest possible audience. We're free from that. It makes it easier for us to take risks. Most everyone we work with is a first-time creator. In the U.S. that's unheard of.

What's a typical budget for your shows?
They range from maybe \$260,000 per hour on the top end, maybe \$300,000, but that's an anomaly. We can also do a one-hour drama for \$200,000. A half-hour like *On the Spectrum* is \$170,000, but it's expensive because there's a lot of postproduction on that.

How do you keep costs so low?
We shoot on location and we don't have writers rooms. A lot of our shows are written by a single writer. Sometimes the writer is also the director, and usually the creator too. For *Charlie Golf One*, Zion Rubin created, wrote and directed all 40 episodes of season one and all 40 episodes of season two, all on his own. *Fauda* is the only show where we have a writers room. But this approach takes time, which is why our shows aren't on a schedule like you have in the U.S. We don't get a new season every year. We get a new one every three years.

Is that changing now that your shows are selling internationally?

R É S U M É

CURRENT TITLE
Managing director,
Yes Studios

PREVIOUS JOB
vp acquisitions, channels
and programing, Yes DBS
Satellite Services

BIG HIT
Yes TV's *On the Spectrum*,
a dramedy about living
with autism, won top
honors at TV fests Series
Mania and Monte-Carlo.
Amazon has ordered a
pilot for a U.S. version for
Parenthood showrunner
Jason Katims.

Are you under pressure to increase production?

We won't let international schedules run the way we do production. We might spend a little more, like on *Fauda*, because we know it's going to be seen and we don't want to disappoint, but we won't speed things up. And we're not going to cast someone because we think they might have more international appeal. That's not what we are doing here. We're making great television for ourselves. And then selling it to the world.

***Fauda* is the first Israeli series to portray Arabic characters — Palestinian terrorists, in fact — in a sympathetic or at least complex manner. Were you expecting a backlash?**

We were expecting a ton! We were panicking before *Fauda* launched [in Israel]. We thought we were going to get it from the left and from the right. It was terrifying. But I remember seeing the first rough cut. I thought: "Oh my God, this is so good! I just hope other people think so, too." We were also worried because the story feels like something that's constantly in the news here — we see Palestinians and Israeli soldiers every day. Would people want to be entertained by what they see every day on the news?

Is there a big difference among streamers in what they want from international shows?

Netflix says: "If you do an original for us, we want something

completely different, something you would never do as a broadcaster." You go to Amazon and you hear the opposite: "We want to be the best in class of whatever is working in your territory. So if you are a Japanese producer of game shows, we want to have the best Japanese game show." With the others, I don't know yet. We'll see.

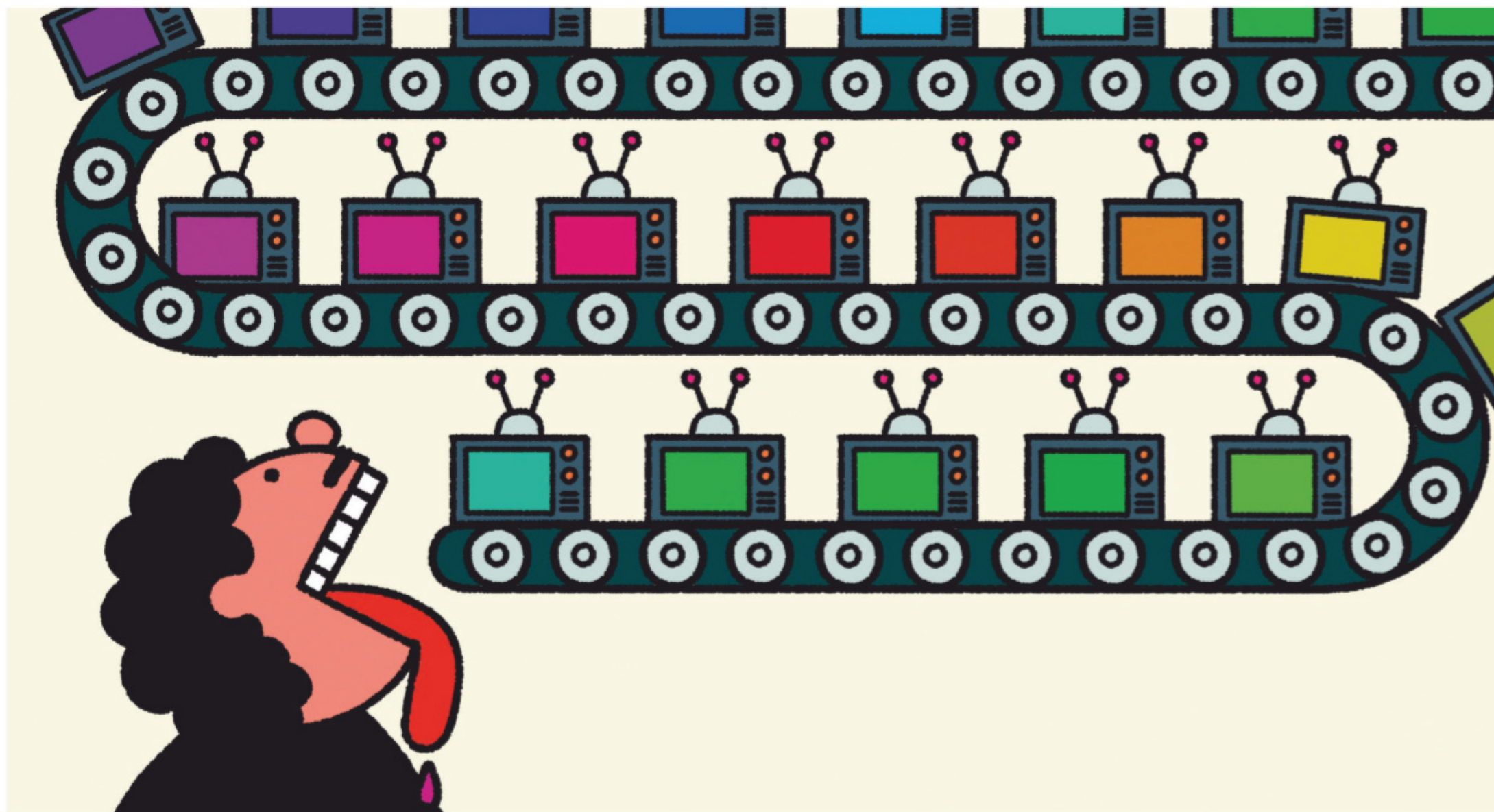
Some of the studios, particularly Disney, reportedly are holding back their series for the international market to feed their new streaming services. Does that open an opportunity for local producers like Yes? I think the streamers, the global players who are distributing directly to consumers, will in the future take care of the big, ubiquitous shows and, depending on their strategies, do some local productions in individual territories. As domestic and local producers and broadcasters, you have to go hyperlocal because the rest is hyperglobal. You have to go the opposite of that and make shows that speak to the culture and the history and the zeitgeist of where you are ... and if your main office is in Los Angeles, you aren't going to get it. It will just play differently.

You know the whole talk about globalization and how everybody's the same? We are so not. The more I travel, the more I realize how vastly different everybody is — our history, our music, our references. Everything. We're not the same. There is no one-size-fits-all. If you are really trying to connect on an emotional level, you have to do it locally.

Interview edited for length and clarity.



Yes TV is developing local-language versions of its hit drama series across Europe and in India, Russia and beyond.



DIGITAL | NATALIE JARVEY

Streaming TV's Binge-Watching Dilemma: 'Burn' Episodes or Take a 'Weekly Pulse'?

Disney+ bets on a seven-day rollout, Netflix sticks to all-at-once drops and Apple TV+ experiments with both as the strategies spark debate: 'There is a bit of a gut-level conversation that goes on about what shows are better suited to which rollout'

When Disney+ users logged in to the service for the first time Nov. 12, they found thousands of classic movies and television shows. But there was only one, 40-minute episode of the service's most high-profile original series, Jon Favreau's *Star Wars*-adjacent *The Mandalorian*.

For now, Disney plans to roll out all of the streamer's originals on a weekly basis, showing its commitment to a legacy TV release strategy in an era when, thanks to Netflix, audiences are accustomed to having all the programming they can devour at their fingertips. "We're just getting started, so it made sense to build our fan base with episodic content coming out once a week in a more traditional model," Ricky Strauss, president of content and marketing for Disney+, told *THR*

NATALIE JARVEY is digital media editor at The Hollywood Reporter.

ahead of the service's launch. "We felt that if we put everything out at once it would be harder for us to build the audience."

Hollywood has been weighing the merits of the binge model ever since Netflix popularized it with *House of Cards* in 2013. But with four streaming services expected to launch by the end of 2020, the question of how to release a TV show is taking on new urgency.



Strauss

Each platform is approaching the calculation differently: Apple, which dropped its first batch of TV+ shows Nov. 1, has opted for multiple rollout strategies. It released Hailee Steinfeld period comedy *Dickinson* all at once but only the first three episodes of dramas *The Morning Show*, *See* and *For All Mankind*, which will unfold weekly. (The younger-skewing *Dickinson* was also the best reviewed, per Metacritic scores.)

Meanwhile, WarnerMedia's HBO Max, per

chief creative officer Kevin Reilly, is expected to offer a "weekly pulse" of original programming to keep subscribers tuned in when the service arrives in May, in line with HBO's strategy. "We know people love to binge," he acknowledged during WarnerMedia's Oct. 29 investor day, "and on HBO Max, you can binge previous seasons and library content to your heart's desire." Amazon mostly follows the Netflix model and releases all episodes of its series at once in a bid to satisfy its Prime members.



Reilly

At the heart of the debate is how best to generate and retain subscribers at a moment when consumers have more choices than ever before and can cancel services via a few easy clicks. (In November alone, some 50 new shows launched across linear and digital platforms.) For companies like Disney, WarnerMedia and NBCUniversal, which will launch direct-to-consumer

Illustration by Leon Edler

offering Peacock next spring, a streaming future is one where success is more closely tied to their ability to grow subs. Adding to the pressure, both Disney and WarnerMedia have set aggressive streaming goals — as many as 90 million subscribers in their first five years.

There are several reasons why an upstart streamer might choose a weekly rollout over a binge model. For starters, a show may not be entirely in the can in time to launch all at once, as was the case with some Disney+ originals. For a new service with a smaller slate of originals, a weekly rollout also can keep audiences engaged (and paying) over time. “In part, it’s not wanting to race content onto the platform and wanting to make sure that your subscribers are sticking around,” says Julie McNamara, executive vp original content at CBS All Access, which has largely released shows weekly. Notes Pivotal entertainment analyst Jeffrey Wlodarczak, “The hope is weekly releases will help reduce subscriber churn, which for these players is likely to be quite high given the lack of switching costs.”

Plus, there’s the sought-after buzz factor. “We like creating cultural impact and nurturing maximum IP value from our IP,” Reilly explained during the investor day. “Our creators also see the difference in rolling out shows gradually and letting them breathe. HBO hits like *Succession* and *Chernobyl* became part of the zeitgeist with a weekly release schedule rather than fading quickly after a binge and burn.”

Netflix content chief Ted Sarandos has pushed back on the notion that the binge release doesn’t drive conversation. On Oct. 16, he noted that based on data from around 35 shows that release week-to-week in some markets because of licensing agreements, “we actually get more viewing and cumulatively more social media buzz — more tweets, more activity on social media — around these shows for the all-at-once model.” But he acknowledged, “It’s in a more concentrated experience, for sure.” (Social conversation around *Stranger Things*’ third season was strongest on its July 4 launch day, per Nielsen.)

The all-at-once model makes sense for Netflix originals given that binge behavior is baked into the experience. It built up its early membership base by offering full catalogs of classic TV series like *Friends* and *The Office* and leaned into the notion that viewers could catch up on the previous seasons of *Mad Men* or *Breaking Bad* before a new season premiered on linear. And to great success: Its subscriber base has shot up more than 200 percent to 158 million in the past five years.

The company’s argument is that it can take time for viewers to get hooked on a show — three episodes for the first season of *Orange Is the New Black*, per a 2015 Netflix study. Once they do, they are likely to finish the season within a week. Netflix, which like most



From left: Disney+ is going with a weekly rollout of *The Mandalorian*, while Apple TV+ released all episodes of *Dickinson* at once.

streamers releases only select viewership data, disclosed that 18.2 million households finished *Stranger Things*’ third season within four days. (Nielsen reported that 824,000 U.S. viewers watched all eight episodes in one day.)

Though there has been some backlash to the binge — *Orange Is the New Black* creator Jenji Kohan told *THR* in 2015 that she missed “having people on the same page” — Netflix has deviated little from that release strategy. (Most of its rollout experimentation has been in the unscripted space, like with competition series *Rhythm+Flow*, which released its episodes in batches over two weeks.) Sarandos’ defense of the model seems to imply that bingeing makes viewers more likely to keep watching when they otherwise might have dropped off. “I’m a big fan of *Succession* on HBO, and I watch it every Sunday night when it comes out just like everyone else,” he said in October, adding, “I get aggravated every week waiting for the next episode.” Executives at Disney+ and HBO Max, meanwhile, are betting their shows will be strong enough to sustain the weekly cadence.

Experimentation is expected to keep up as platforms settle on a model that works best for each show. Hulu, for example, has explored several different strategies over the years, leaning early on upon its reputation as a place

for next-day TV to roll out shows weekly, but more recently implementing an all-at-once release for comedies like *PEN15* and *Ramy*. It also binge-released young-skewing *Looking for Alaska* because viewers weaned on streaming tend to prefer that option. CBS All Access also is exploring new models and plans to drop all but the final episode of drama *Interrogation*, making the finale available once a viewer has watched the other installments. “There is a bit of a gut-level conversation that goes on about what shows are better suited to which roll-out,” McNamara notes. It’s unlikely that the industry will adopt a one-size-fits-all model, good news for talent like *Watchmen* creator Damon Lindelof, who concedes that bingeing “would be appealing to me as a subscriber but not appealing to me as a storyteller.”

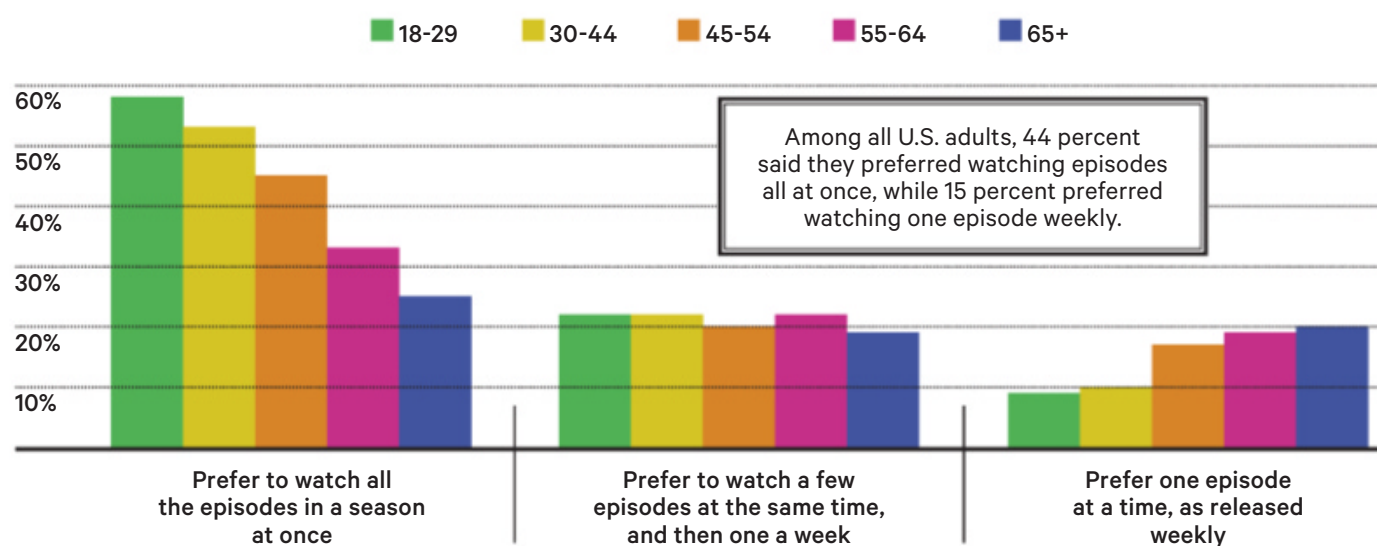
Still, the new services flooding the market may ultimately be driven by the data. Among the 30-to-44 age group, for example, 53 percent of U.S. adults say they would prefer to watch all episodes at once, a *THR*/Morning Consult poll conducted Oct. 24-28 found. “People are used to click-and-watch-anything,” argues LightShed Partners analyst Rich Greenfield. “Bingeing is very pro-consumer and very hard to move away from.”

Kirsten Chuba contributed to this report.

THR/Morning Consult Poll

Younger Americans Prefer to Watch TV Episodes All at Once

A majority of U.S. adults ages 18-44 like Netflix’s on-demand strategy, while older audiences say they want the weekly model planned by HBO Max and Disney+



Source: *THR*/Morning Consult poll conducted among a nationally representative sample of 2,329 adults Oct. 24-28; percentages don't equal 100



THE RACE | STEPHEN GALLOWAY

Can *Parasite* Break Best Pic Barriers?

Roma came closer to the top Oscar than any international film but had to settle for the foreign feature award. Here's how Bong Joon Ho's hit can make history

In 1938, World War I drama *The Grand Illusion* became the first foreign-language film ever nominated for best picture. Jean Renoir's movie, which follows a blue-collar French soldier imprisoned by the Germans, is widely considered a masterpiece — but that was only one factor in its selection: The story tapped into a raging anti-war spirit then rampant in America, amid fears the country would be sucked into World War II. In the end, however, this wasn't enough to land it the top prize, and it lost to the now-forgotten *Life of Emile Zola*.

Decades later, only nine foreign films (as the Academy defines them) have been nominated for best picture, three directed by Hollywood veterans — Clint Eastwood's *Letters From Iwo Jima*, Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* and Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma*. None has won. Will this year break with tradition?

The answer, most insiders say, is it's a long shot. Last season, *Roma* seemed poised to win after earning 10 noms, only for *Green Book* to snatch away the best picture prize. In hindsight, pundits were quick to list the reasons for *Roma*'s defeat, ranging from its slow pace to its black-and-white

STEPHEN GALLOWAY is executive editor at The Hollywood Reporter.

photography to its funding by a streamer (Netflix) to vote-splitting between the best picture and foreign-language categories.

This season, one entry has emerged with a serious chance: Bong Joon Ho's *Parasite*, a sur-



Bong

real fantasy about a dirt-poor family that slowly insinuates itself into the life of a wealthy young couple, only to turn against them. Hailed by critics in the most lavish terms — “[It] obliterates the tired distinctions between art films and popcorn movies,” wrote *The New York Times* — the film has earned \$14.4 million in North America and \$112 million worldwide.

Since May, when the South Korean drama won the Cannes Film Festival's Palme d'Or in a unanimous vote, it has steadily gained ground with Academy members. A top screenwriter tells *THR* it's his favorite movie of the year, while a comedy producer says the film's parable of rich-versus-poor could not be better timed for Hollywood liberals sick of social injustice.

A significant number of voters appear inclined to rank *Parasite* No. 1 on their nomination ballots. Whether that's enough to qualify it for a nom or whether it will also need to pick up some second- and

third-place votes in the preferential-vote system is the question.

A bigger hurdle for *Parasite* is likely to come in phase two, when it has to cross the line from a nomination to a win.

Unlike the other best picture contenders this year, *Parasite* is also likely to be nominated for the international feature film Oscar, leaving Academy members with a quandary: Do they split their votes between the two awards, thereby diminishing *Parasite*'s chances of winning either — or do they choose it in both categories, thus positioning it for an unprecedented double victory?

Many insiders think that dilemma cost *Roma* the top Oscar. But one *Parasite* supporter argues the comparison is false: “*Roma* was a beautiful film, but it never had that ‘Oh my God!’ feeling. *Parasite* is a passion vote.”

If so, how can *Parasite* solidify its chances? Here's how:

First and foremost, obviously it needs to land the best picture nomination. That means persuading enough people to see a movie with subtitles (often a barrier) and campaigning in places where the feature is likely to do well: among indie and international members. The *Parasite* team is traveling to London in December ahead of the BAFTAs and the pic's February U.K. opening.

Second, voters must be convinced the film has a legitimate chance. Netflix may have shaken the walls with its *Roma* campaign, says one strategist. “It allowed

The Business

2019
AWARDS SEASON

people to consider this could be done” — that a foreign entry could become a key contender for best picture. Now *Parasite* must publicize its critical raves and audience exit scores to prove it's no ordinary film.

Third, the movie needs to boost its actors. Given how few pictures win the ultimate Oscar without acting noms, campaigners should work to ensure that at least one of the cast gets recognized. (Another largely foreign-language film, *The Farewell*, is heavily promoting Awkwafina and Chinese actress Zhao Shuzhen.) That's underway: *Parasite*'s Park So-dam attended October's Governors Awards with Bong, while Song Kang-ho will join him in London.

Fourth, the film has to remind voters of its relevance. Phase two will heat up as the Democratic Party primaries gather steam and there's no better time to promote this message: In an age of nationalism, think international. So far, however, there are no plans to connect the movie more directly to politics, and campaigners are wary of seeming exploitative.

Parasite may have missed its best chance of improving its odds: by avoiding the international feature category. Now, paradoxically, as Korea's official submission, it faces an embarrassment of riches. **THR**

Foreign Film Oscar Nominations

These are the international films that have earned a nomination in the coveted best picture race, along with their total noms

TITLE	ORIGIN	YEAR	NOMS
<i>The Grand Illusion</i>	France	1937	1
<i>The Emigrants</i>	Sweden	1971	5
<i>Cries and Whispers</i>	Sweden	1972	5
<i>Il Postino</i>	Italy	1994	5
<i>Life Is Beautiful</i>	Italy	1997	7*
<i>Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon</i>	Taiwan	2000	10*
<i>Letters From Iwo Jima</i>	Japan/U.S.	2006	4
<i>Amour</i>	Austria/France	2012	5*
<i>Roma</i>	Mexico	2018	10*

*Winner of foreign-language Oscar

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**FASCINATING
TO WATCH**”

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TRULY SHINES”

Entertainment

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BEST DIRECTOR

Benedict Andrews

BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY

Joe Shrapnel & Anna Waterhouse

BEST ACTRESS

Kristen Stewart

BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR

Jack O'Connell • Anthony Mackie

BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS

Margaret Qualley • Zazie Beetz

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1 Concept art shows Elsa's new "queen uniform" with a more militant silhouette. **2** Anna's look was inspired by haute couture designers.

BEHIND THE SCREEN | CAROLYN GIARDINA

Princesses to Caped Crusaders

Frozen's Elsa and Anna ditch their royal robes for adventurous travel attire, with artists drawing inspiration for their new wardrobe from myriad cultures, themes and Parisian fashion

It's been six years since Elsa and Anna broke new ground (and grossed \$1.27 billion) in a feminist fairy tale of two sisters coming into their own in Disney's *Frozen*. Now, the royal siblings are back in *Frozen 2* (out Nov. 22), a little older, wiser and shedding their princess attire for a journey.

Set three years after *Frozen*, the sequel sees Anna and Elsa leave the Scandinavian-inspired kingdom of Arendelle to find the source of Elsa's magic.

The Walt Disney Animation Studios team traded Anna and Elsa's ball gowns for autumnal dresses, designed for adventure and reflecting their maturity.

"It was tricky to find the colors for Anna," says visual development artist Griselda Sastrawinata-Lemay, who crafted a new look for the auburn-haired princess voiced by Kristen Bell.

"She was going to be set against the richness of the forest, and Elsa would be in her icy blue signature color."

Anna was given a sleek black dress, paired with a burgundy cape. A pop of color was added to the inner lining of her cloak along with magenta soles for her boots.

The inspiration for the outfit came from Norway's traditional Bunad folk costumes that feature detailed embroidery, reflected in Anna's cape. Sastrawinata-Lemay also researched high-fashion designers including Valentino, Elie Saab, Ferragamo, Louis Vuitton and shoe designer

Manolo Blahnik. But it was Christian Dior's debut haute couture "New Look" collection from 1947 that she leaned in to.



Lee

"Anna is a fairy-tale character, and we wanted to give her a fairy-tale silhouette. The Dior New Look is very much

married to that silhouette," says Sastrawinata-Lemay.

Anna wears a Japanese obi as a belt — a symbol, Sastrawinata-Lemay explains, of Arendelle's global influences: "The gate of Arendelle is open, and there's a lot of people from all over the world.

Maybe someone gave her a gift and she is wearing it. It shows that she is open to the world."

For Queen Elsa (voiced by Idina Menzel), a few rules were bent. "Silhouette-wise, we knew we had to lift her hemline off the floor, and we were a little worried that she might not look like Elsa anymore," explains visual development artist Brittney Lee.

Elsa's cape had strong shoulders to "feel a little militaristic and like this is a bit of her queen uniform," she adds.

Elsa's journey in the new film thrusts her into the dark waters of the North, and Lee says her dress was designed to give her freedom in movement.

She is "going through so much in the dark sea," says Lee. "We wanted to make sure that this dress could really move and look beautiful underwater. So we looked at a lot of underwater photography and a lot of dancewear to try to find a cut that would give us the best performance."

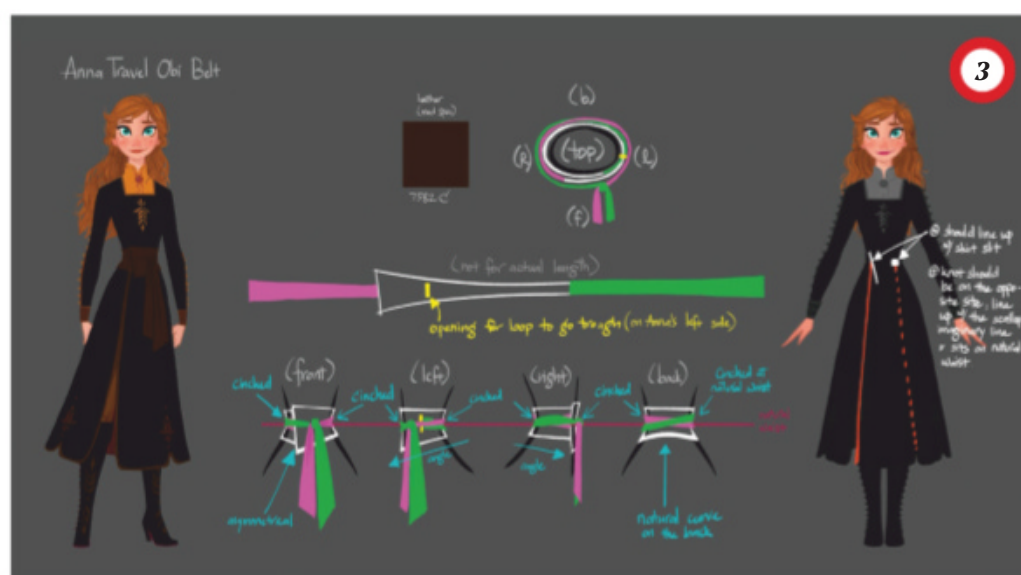
Elsa's magic powers to conjure ice were referenced in her attire; a peek-a-boo back on her coat is adorned with an encrusted snowflake emblem, for example, and her boots also feature a snowflake pattern and heels made of ice.

But the real magic, Lee teases, is in Elsa's dress. The ice sequins "fade into nothing up her neckline toward her clavicle," she explains. "We really thought that was a magical neckline." **THR**



PODCAST!

The weekly show *Behind the Screen*, hosted by tech editor Carolyn Giardina, features conversations with cinematographers, editors, composers and other artists behind the magic of motion pictures. Listen and subscribe at THR.com/podcasts.



3 Sketches for Anna's Japanese-inspired belt and how it fits with her Parisian-style dress. **4** Kristoff (Jonathan Groff), Elsa and Anna in the sequel.



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David Hoberman, p.g.a.

Tom Harper, p.g.a.

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BY AN ACTRESS

DRAMA

FELICITY JONES

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BY AN ACTOR
IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

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“SPECTACULAR”

VULTURE

“Jones and Redmayne have so much
GENUINE CHEMISTRY
together”

THE WRAP

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Style

Fashion



Tom Hanks wore Sperry sneakers to play Fred Rogers.

Won't You Be Mine?

Get your kicks with styles that riff on the understated sneakers donned by Fred Rogers, subject of the new film *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*
By Falen Hardge

1. Vans
OG Era LX Colour-Block canvas, inspired by the original Z-Boys-influenced Era designs; \$65, mrporter.com

2. Common Projects
Italian-made Four Hole in Leather Low in off-white leather with cream laces; \$423, revolve.com

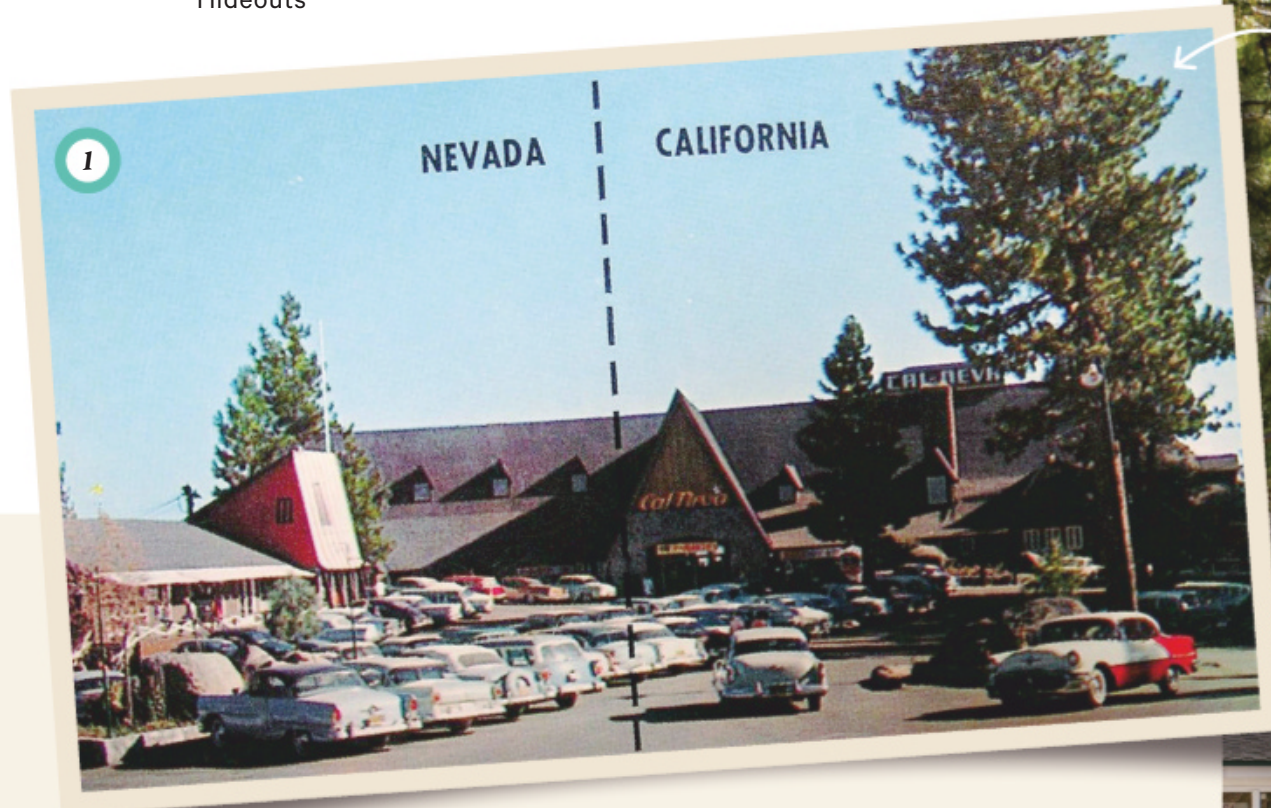
3. Fear of God
Italian-made leather and cotton logo-printed

101 Sneaker; \$595, at Nordstrom

4. Sperry
The original nonslip boat shoe, innovated in the 1930s by Sperry, whose sneakers Rogers wore religiously on his TV show; \$75, sperry.com

5. Clearweather
Donny/TOTF Green asymmetrical lace-ups in hunter green; \$50, clearweatherbrand.com





Larry Ellison's Next Nobu Getaway

In white-hot Lake Tahoe, Robert De Niro and his hospitality team are joining with Megan and David's father to remake Cal Neva, owned in its Rat Pack heyday by Frank Sinatra *By Peter Kiefer*

To breathe new life into Lake Tahoe's Cal Neva Lodge and Casino — the famed Alpine stomping ground of the Rat Pack — Oracle billionaire **Larry Ellison** has tapped the trio of **Robert De Niro**, chef **Nobu Matsuhisa** and former film producer turned hotelier **Meir Teper**, who together run the Nobu Hospitality Group, to redo the property, *THR* has learned.



Ellison

In 2018, the Oracle founder acquired Cal Neva through bankruptcy proceedings for \$35.8 million from a Napa Valley-based developer. Since then, locals in this world-class skiing area have been abuzz over what comes next for a property that lays claim to one of the most colorful histories of any lodge in the country.

"We're now designing and developing [it] to make it into a Nobu Hotel and, of course, a restaurant," says Teper, whose producing credits include *From Dusk Till Dawn*. He adds that the project is still very much in the planning phase. A spokesman for Ellison (father of producers **Megan** and **David Ellison** and one

of Tahoe's biggest property owners, having spent an estimated \$102 million on various properties) declined to comment.

Ellison's planned redevelopment of Cal Neva, in Crystal Bay on the lake's North Shore, will add even more of a luxury sheen to a region that is increasingly drawing the attention of California's creative and tech class. Last year, Facebook co-founder **Mark Zuckerberg** shelled out \$59 million to acquire two properties, and the shoreline in Incline Village, Nevada, is now informally known as "Billionaire's Row." According to **Bill Dietz**, president of Tahoe Luxury Properties, much of the spike in popularity in Tahoe's upscale sector can be attributed to Nevada's favorable tax structure with respect to California. The

Trump administration's tax bill, signed into law in 2017, has only accelerated that trend because it removed certain tax breaks that were specific to California. According to Dietz, the number of \$10 million-plus homes sold in Crystal Bay and Incline Village (both of which are on the Nevada side) is on track to double over 2018. In the third quarter of 2019, the median home sales price in Crystal Bay and Incline Village was at a 14-year high, while on the California side of the lake, the median sales price was the third highest it's been in 14 years.

But it's not just billionaires who

are attracted to the area. **Jeremy Renner** owns a home in Tahoe and admitted in a recent *Men's Journal* profile that his purchase was partially for "business reasons," citing Nevada's tax code. Actress and activist **Alyssa Milano** and husband CAA agent **Dave Bugliari** also own there, as does HBO programming chief **Casey Bloys**. Tahoe also launched its own film festival five years ago.

Cal Neva would be the latest project in an ongoing partnership between Ellison and the Nobu Hotel group. Ellison has contracted the Nobu group to run his Epiphany hotel in Palo Alto



This \$14.4 million seven-bedroom home — listed by The Agency in Park City, Utah — includes an OxySpace unit.

Combating Altitude Sickness: A Home Retrofit

For many city slickers, the headaches start hours after arriving in a ski town, followed by nausea, dizziness and poor sleep. Acute mountain sickness, occurring at oxygen-depleted altitudes above 8,000 feet, affects half the population that lives at or near sea level. But there's hope: oxygen enrichment systems, such as the one **Haim Saban** had installed at his home in Aspen. "We try to trick the body into thinking it's at altitude but still giving it oxygen so the acclimatizing doesn't stop," says **H.P. Reilly**, CEO of the Colorado-based Oxygen Company. A flip of a switch allows vents to provide oxygen to a residence, especially bedrooms. Reilly says demand for his OxySpace product has skyrocketed due to the development boom in ski-resort towns. The cost can run \$6,000 to \$500,000. — P.K.



1 A vintage photo of Cal Neva Lodge, showing its location on the state line between California and Nevada.
2 The entrance in 2014, a year after the casino closed.
3 Guests lounging poolside in 1962 during Cal Neva's Rat Pack heyday.
4 Marilyn Monroe with co-owner Frank Sinatra (right) at Cal Neva in 1960; pictured at center is former owner Bert "Wingy" Grober.

and the Nobu Ryokan hotel on Carbon Beach in Malibu, another property Ellison owns. He also lured Matsuhisa out to his Four Seasons Hotel on Hawaii's Lanai Island to open a restaurant.

But Cal Neva gives Ellison — and by extension, the Nobu Hotel group — ownership not only of a property that straddles California and Nevada but one that comes with enough golden age Hollywood lore to fill several pulpy anthologies.

Built in 1926, the property encompasses multiple structures including a 10-story hotel, the casino, wedding chapels and a

large theater. There

were once several cabins on the property as well. In 1960,

Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Chicago

mobster **Sam Giancana** purchased Cal Neva for \$250,000, and it became a favorite getaway for everyone from **John F. Kennedy** to **Lucille Ball** and **Judy Garland**. **Marilyn Monroe** was also a regular and, as rumor has it, overdosed at the resort while on vacation one week before she was found dead of an overdose in her Brentwood home. After Sinatra's tumultuous ownership — at one point, the



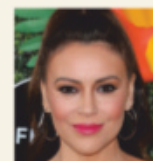
Bloys



Nevada Gaming Board revoked his gambling license due to his association with Giancana — the property changed hands multiple times, and in 1976 MGM mogul **Kirk Kerkorian** took ownership before selling it nine years later. Cal Neva has been closed since 2013.

But don't expect the Cal Neva redo to move ahead quickly. Tahoe stakeholders and the Regional Planning Agency are known for rigorous oversight of projects on this scale. "Anyone jumping into this is going to have a thick development stomach, patience and a strong team of attorneys and planners," says Dietz.

Much further along is the Boulder Bay Resort, just up the street from Cal Neva. When completed, the new luxury property will be a mixed-use site of 59 residences and a 275-room, five-star hotel, along with a gallery and retail component. The first phase of the project — 18 residential condos — was just finished. Also on-site is another one of Tahoe's once-booming casino properties,



Milano

the Tahoe Biltmore, established in 1946. Plans call for tearing it down to create a health and wellness retreat, but gambling will still be offered at Boulder Bay. "Gaming is not the future driver of this community. It's really more of an amenity," says Boulder Bay president **Heather Bacon**. "Our primary focus is going to be on health, wellness, recreation and rejuvenation." So far, Bacon says, they've been getting quite a bit of interest from prospective buyers who like Nevada's tax benefit.

Adds Dietz: "The gravitational pull of Nevada for high-net-worth Californians is unmistakable." **THR**

SKI RENTALS

Nab a Vacay House in Tahoe at Any Budget

Whether you're a C-suiter or slugging it out in an agency mailroom, Lake Tahoe's rental market has you covered. Below are three rentals for the super-baller, the baller and, well, the merely gainfully employed. Prices reflect the holiday high season.



Assistants' Group Share

\$320/night or \$2,700/week

Listed with Airbnb — as "Cozy Carnelian Bay Family Friendly Cabin" — this four-bedroom cabin can accommodate up to eight guests. It features a granite fireplace, large windows and a mudroom.



Producer's Getaway

\$3,000/night or \$21,000/week

A Craftsman-inspired, 5,700-square-foot home in Squaw Valley offers five bedrooms, multiple decks, a hot tub, a fire pit and a great room with cathedral ceilings, listed by Tahoe Luxury Properties.



Chairman's Lair

\$7,500/night or \$52,500/week

The two-story, 3,400-square-foot penthouse of The Ritz-Carlton, Lake Tahoe at Northstar has four bedrooms, a home theater and a terrace with a fireplace, listed by Tahoe Luxury Properties. — P.K.



← View of the first round of new luxury condo units at Boulder Bay Resort in Crystal Bay.

A Luxury SUV to Dethrone Your Tesla

A *Game of Thrones* star reveals why he's invested in the all-electric Fisker Ocean SUV, taking orders Nov. 27: 'I don't want to walk around in a constant cloud of guilt'

By Nikolaj Coster-Waldau

Because of my work as a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Development Programme, I traveled in September to the Peruvian part of the Amazon to try to understand the subtext to the story of the fires in the rainforest that had caught the attention of the world. Climate change is an overwhelming issue, and I am one of 7 billion people — what difference can I make? I don't want to walk around in a constant cloud of guilt because I live in this world we created. And though it feels good, I have a feeling that liking and sharing **Greta Thunberg's** tweets



Thunberg

won't do the trick. The future we all want to preserve, is that a future full of restrictions and legislation? A world where the only way forward is by limiting our access to all the things we take for granted today: transportation, food, water, a pair of jeans ... a laugh?

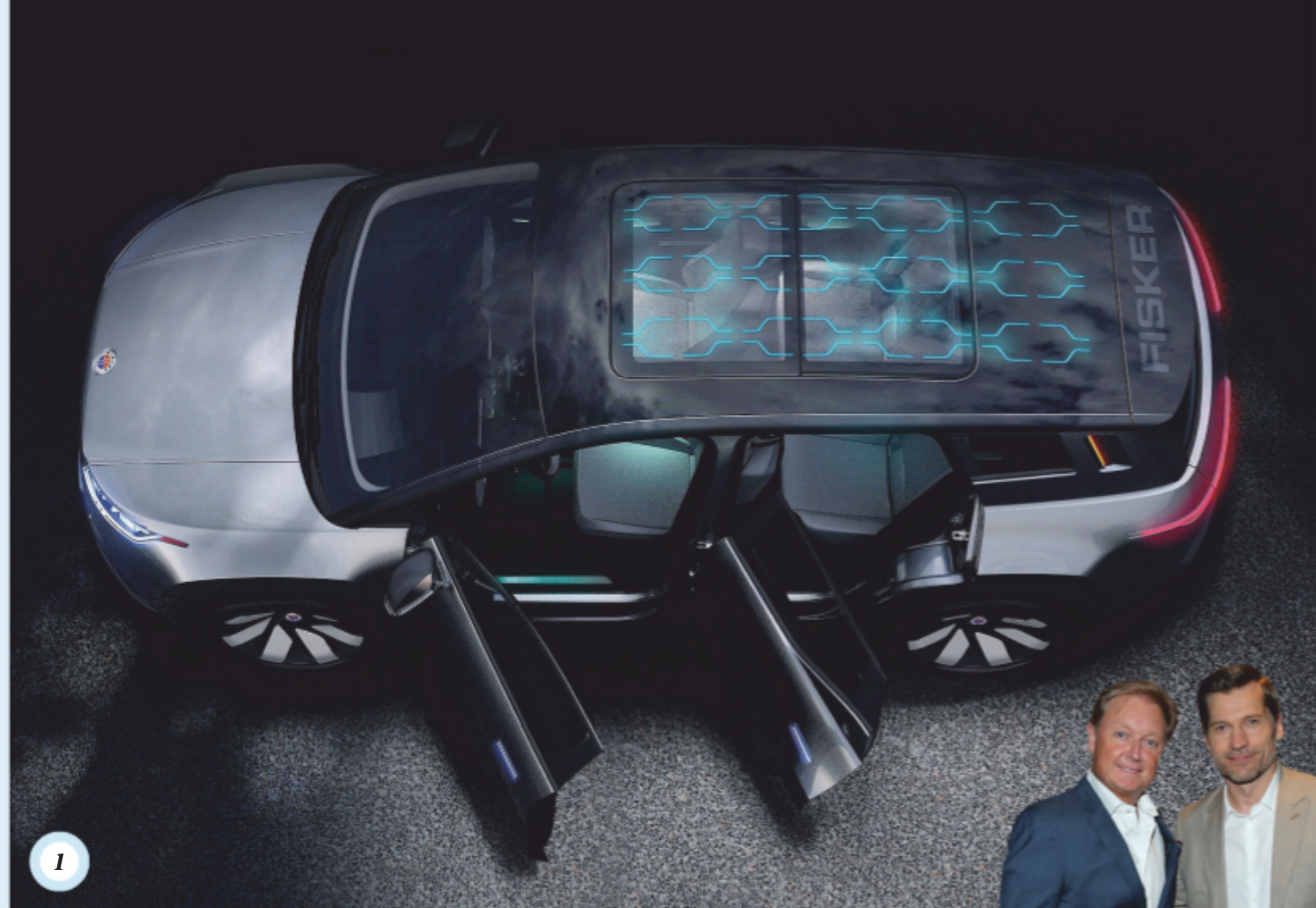
To quote a friend of mine who is a lot smarter than me, architect **Bjarke Ingels**: "The idea that sustainability needs to sacrifice quality of life is a flawed one. It's a design challenge, a challenge to build something that transforms the idea of sustainability into something that will increase the quality of life for all those around it."

One person meeting that challenge is **Henrik Fisker**, who has designed some of the most iconic cars over the past decades for BMW and others, like the BMW Z8, Aston Martin DB9 and Aston Martin V8 Vantage.

He's a hero for gas-guzzling supercars. He is a fellow Dane, I am a fan, and we met, of all places, on Twitter.

When we met in person, he described his new project — an all-electric luxury SUV — and asked me if I would help spread the word on his car. The problem as I see it with most electric cars is that they only accomplish the basics. They get you from point A to B. They run electric so you don't pollute while driving, but that's it. They are basically unattractive combustion engine cars that have a battery thrown into them — and for most of them, a battery with a limited range. What Fisker does is to try to make every part of the car in a sustainable and attractive way, like a full-length solar roof, recycled floor mats and vegan leather seats. It looks incredibly cool and inviting, with a great 250- to 300-mile range, and at a cost of just under \$40,000, it's a luxury car affordable to a mass market.

I said yes and even became an investor, not only because it's a great car but more importantly, I hope and believe it can inspire other companies to actively incorporate sustainability goals into all aspects of their business. Fisker then had the idea of calling me "sustainability" adviser. Which I am not. Just to be clear. Thanks Henrik, sounds cool, but I am an actor and a citizen, and that's really it.



1 & 2 The Fisker Ocean SUV, due in 2022, features a rooftop solar-power unit, all-vegan interiors and materials recycled from ocean debris. **3** Nikolaj Coster-Waldau (right) with car designer Henrik Fisker, who tells *THR*, "Nikolaj sent me a note on Twitter, and we saw eye to eye."

And what about Hollywood? Is our industry changing, are we at the forefront? Looking at social media, you would think so. And things are happening, but usually only when a camera is pointed at people. Remember a few years back when all awards shows only used EVs for the red carpet? We made a difference. We mattered. We showed the way. So cool. So green, so ... brief. Now it's back to the Escalade. But hey, we are not using plastic straws anymore!

To believe that change will come from Hollywood is not really based in reality (when did that stop us?), but we are great at reacting — and things around us are changing, and changing us. I have a good friend who loves his SUV. It's not electric. But he cannot give up his car. He is a good guy, he's works for the U.N., so if he has a problem going electric, we all do. But if he is presented with an alternative that doesn't mean a reduction in his quality of life, something like the Fisker SUV, I think he'd transition to electric in a heartbeat. **THR**



Racy New Releases at the L.A. Auto Show

◀ Land Rover Defender 110

Among the most talked-about models showcased at the L.A. Auto Show (through Dec. 1 at the Los Angeles Convention Center) is Land Rover's boxy yet sexy, utilitarian yet luxurious Defender 110. It's finally coming back to the U.S. in 2020 with pricing a steal: from \$49,900. Guaranteed to have a long wait list.



Audi RS6 Avant

In addition to its electric e-tron Sportback, Audi is spotlighting the RS6 Avant (above), a sleek, souped-up wagon with a 4.0 liter twin-turbocharged V8. Pricing for both models due in early 2020.

Lexus LC500 Convertible

Lexus took its top-range LC 500 coupe and made it into a stunning convertible, on sale next summer as a 2021 model. With 5.0 V8 and 472 horsepower, it's a droptop with speed and looks. The price could land near \$100K. — JON ALAIN GUZIK



NETFLIX PROUDLY CONGRATULATES

SPIRIT AWARDS WINNER

Marriage Story

ROBERT ALTMAN AWARD - BEST ENSEMBLE

SPIRIT AWARDS NOMINEES

AMERICAN FACTORY

美国工厂

BEST DOCUMENTARY

Marriage Story

BEST FEATURE

BEST SCREENPLAY - NOAH BAUMBACH

HIGH FLYING BIRD

BEST SCREENPLAY -

TARELL ALVIN McCRANEY

SEE YOU YESTERDAY

BEST FIRST FEATURE

BEST FIRST SCREENPLAY -

FREDRICA BAILEY, STEFON BRISTOL

GOTHAM INDEPENDENT FILM AWARDS NOMINEES

AMERICAN FACTORY

美国工厂

BEST DOCUMENTARY

AUDIENCE AWARD

Marriage Story

BEST FEATURE

BEST ACTOR - ADAM DRIVER

BEST SCREENPLAY - NOAH BAUMBACH

AUDIENCE AWARD

THE EDGE OF DEMOCRACY

BEST DOCUMENTARY

AUDIENCE AWARD

RUSSIAN DOLL

BREAKTHROUGH SERIES - SHORT FORMAT

TUCA & Bertie

BREAKTHROUGH SERIES - SHORT FORMAT

HIGH FLYING BIRD

BEST ACTOR -

ANDRÉ HOLLAND

BEST SCREENPLAY -

TARELL ALVIN McCRANEY

UNBELIEVABLE

BREAKTHROUGH SERIES - LONG FORMAT

WHEN THEY SEE US

BREAKTHROUGH SERIES - LONG FORMAT

AND SALUTES THIS YEAR'S HONOREES

**GLEN
BASNER**

INDUSTRY TRIBUTE

**LAURA
DERN**

ACTRESS TRIBUTE

**AVA
DuVERNAY**

DIRECTOR TRIBUTE

**SAM
ROCKWELL**

ACTOR TRIBUTE





WHO REALLY HACKED

IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS SINCE A MASSIVE CYBERATTACK CRIPPLED A STUDIO, EMBARRASSED EXECUTIVES AND RESHAPED HOLLYWOOD. THE FBI BLAMED THE BREACH ON A NORTH KOREAN SCHEME TO SABOTAGE SETH ROGEN'S *THE INTERVIEW*. BUT FOR MANY OF THOSE WHOSE LIVES WERE DISRUPTED, THAT PLOT STILL HAS TOO MANY HOLES

BY TATIANA SIEGEL / ILLUSTRATION BY LINCOLN AGNEW

SONY?



ON JAN. 23, 2015,

a manager at Sony Pictures Entertainment shot off an email to a group of 12 in the studio's distribution department that offered intel about an upcoming film from rival Disney. "Midwest exhibitors went into McFARLAND USA expecting a boring track & field movie but came away pleasantly surprised," the manager noted about the sports drama that had been screened the day before. It was a mundane missive: a Hollywood executive sizing up the competition.

What is extraordinary about the email is what sources say it reveals about the 2014 Sony Pictures hack — and the official FBI narrative that pins it on North Korea. The email was drafted nearly nine weeks *after* the now infamous cyberattack ostensibly had been contained. It was passed along to a U.S. cyber researcher in February 2015 by a Ukrainian hacker as alleged proof that his Russian associate had breached Sony and could still do so at will. Despite FBI director James Comey's "very high confidence" that Kim Jong Un was to blame, the Ukrainian source was maintaining that hackers were still accessing Sony's system — and they weren't North Korean.

Exactly five years have passed since the Sony hack, a seismic event that announced itself just before the Thanksgiving holiday on Nov. 24, 2014, when a menacing skeleton simultaneously popped up on thousands of Sony computer screens with the message: "We've obtained all your internal data including your secrets."

That was followed by 22 days of massive data dumps that exposed embarrassing executive email exchanges (like one between then-co-chairman Amy Pascal and producer Scott Rudin in which he refers to Angelina Jolie as "a minimally talented spoiled brat"), trade secrets (including overtures from Marvel to bring Sony-owned Spider-Man into its universe) and five upcoming full-length films (such as Brad Pitt's *Fury*). The breach, which former National Intelligence director James Clapper dubbed "the most serious cyberattack ever made against U.S. interests," rocked the industry and forever altered how studios think about cybersecurity and the global impact of their content. In the aftermath, nearly all of Sony's top management was swept out.

Although the FBI's North Korea attribution was swift (it took just 25 days) and has never wavered, many of those impacted still harbor questions about what exactly happened when a previously unknown hacker group named Guardians of Peace decimated Sony's computer infrastructure and brought one of the six major studios to its knees. *THR* spoke to more than two dozen insiders and executives who worked at Sony at the time, including some who still do, and more than half say they harbor doubts about the FBI's official narrative, which maintains that the hack was a response from North Korea because leader Kim Jong Un objected to his depiction in Seth Rogen's comedy *The Interview*.

"I never believed it had anything to do with *The Interview*," says former Sony Pictures Television head Steve Mosko, who along with former CEO Michael Lynton and Pascal, witnessed his entire email account dumped into public view by GoP.

Mosko, now CEO of Village Roadshow, declined to say exactly why he is personally

so skeptical of the FBI's account. But he's hardly alone. Rogen himself remains uncertain. For him, there was one glaring red flag in the North Korea narrative. In the wake of the breach, he hired a cyber risk team at the private investigative firm Kroll, Inc. to comb through all his devices and accounts as well as those of the film's co-director Evan Goldberg. Not only did they find no breaches, but they discovered that no hack attempts had been made. That offers a peculiar twist given that Rogen was by far the highest-profile person associated with the movie, which he starred in, directed, produced and co-wrote.

"I've got to say, the fact that we were never really specifically targeted always raised suspicions in my head," Rogen tells *THR*.

The FBI declined to comment, noting that the hack remains the subject of an active investigation. Meanwhile, North Korea continues to deny any involvement in the attack, even as it proudly boasts each time it launches a ballistic missile into the sea.

Many, including Lynton, who left the studio in 2017 and now is chairman of Snap Inc., do accept the official explanation. "I believe the experts, and the experts told me it was North Korea. I have no reason to believe otherwise," he says. Through a studio spokesperson, Sony says, "We have no reason to suspect anything other than what the FBI concluded based on their investigation. The studio has moved on."

Still, alternate theories and conspiracies circulate widely among former and current executives. Some believe it was the work of Russian hackers hired by a Sony investor looking to profit from a post-hack stock collapse. Others speculate it was a disgruntled former employee who specifically targeted top executive brass. Perhaps the wildest rumor that still enjoys traction involves the wife of a former



Far left: A scene from Seth Rogen's 2014 comedy *The Interview*, which co-stars James Franco as a TV talking head recruited to assassinate North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, shown above. Below: Then-FBI director James Comey (left) asserted that he had "high confidence" that the North Korean government initiated the cyberattack against Sony Pictures in retaliation for the film.

head of a rival studio, who is said to have helped her friend land a job at Sony sometime before the hack — and that friend turned out to be a Russian honeypot who gave hackers entry into the system.

If a Russia connection seems far-fetched, there's at least some reason to indulge a closer look. Max Popov, a Soviet-born hacker and former FBI informant, claimed in early 2015 that a Russian cyber associate gave him a cache of documents from Sony that were dated both before and after the hack, but were never released in the public dumps. (They included the *McFarland, USA* email referenced earlier.)

At the time, Popov sent the cache to Jeffrey Carr, a researcher and the author of *Inside Cyber Warfare: Mapping the Cyber Underworld* (Seattle-based Carr had been communicating online with Popov in Ukraine for years). Carr, who has provided intelligence briefings to the CIA and is the founder of the annual Suits & Spooks summit, passed along the emails and documents to the FBI in early 2015.

"I said, 'Look, before you jump on the North Korea bandwagon, I'm getting these documents from a Russian hacker who seems to have unlimited ability to pull more documents, even after Sony's network was down.' Literally after their network was in shambles, this guy was still able to send me documents," says Carr. As for the government's

reaction, Carr notes: "The FBI doesn't give you a response. They say, 'Oh, thanks for sharing this information with us,' and that's the last you hear about it."

Former FBI agent E.J. Hilbert, who ran Popov as a source for years in the early aughts, says the hacker might very well have been telling the truth. "With any attack, and very likely with the Sony attack, they thought they had full containment, and they probably did not, and therefore information could have continued to have been extracted by the bad guys from various methodologies," says Hilbert, who now works in cybersecurity in the private sector. "It is very likely that Mr. Popov got his hands on it. He knows people."

Although Popov, who lived in the U.S. for two and a half years, was well connected in cybercrime circles, Hilbert says he knows of no instance in which he liaised with North Koreans. "With North Koreans, no. With Iranians and Russians, yes," he says.

Lynton says he was never made aware of any Russian hackers having access to Sony's then-crippled system. That point was echoed by a number of top executives who were in contact with law enforcement at the time. Adding further intrigue, one former executive recalls being bombarded with emails written in Cyrillic beginning in the summer of 2014.

It is, of course, very possible that Russian hackers never actually breached any Sony corporate accounts and instead these additional emails were stolen from employees' personal accounts (some staffers were using Gmail for work in the hack's aftermath). There also was at least one other break-in of the studio's system nine months before the infamous public hack in 2014. According to leaked emails, vp legal compliance Courtney Schaberg briefed general counsel Leah Weil about a breach in February of that year, noting that "credentials ... for an SPE system may have been obtained by an unauthorized party, who then may have uploaded malware." (The leaked emails show that Sony decided to keep that breach quiet.)

Popov isn't likely to step forward to clarify why he believes Russian contract hackers attacked Sony. Carr says Popov enlisted with the Ukrainian military and has since been deployed to the eastern front.

ALL GOP COMMUNICATIONS STOPPED

Dec. 20, 2014, with a final missive that mocked the FBI: "The result of investigation by FBI is so excellent that you might have seen what we were doing with your own eyes. We congratulate you [sic] success. FBI is the BEST in the world."

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Justice

THE HACK WAS JUST THE START: LEGAL FALLOUT

As if the damage done wasn't severe enough, Sony was sued for negligence by its employees and by one of its partners for breach of contract

BY ASHLEY CULLINS



ANGRY EMPLOYEES

The multiple lawsuits filed by current and past Sony employees in late 2014 and early 2015 were consolidated into a class action led by Michael Corona, who worked for the company from 2004 to 2007. The employees claimed the studio's negligence compromised their private information, including Social Security numbers, account routing information and medical records, leaving them vulnerable. Sony settled after losing a bid to get it tossed. As part of the deal, Sony created a \$2 million fund to reimburse employees (up to \$1,000 each) for preventative measures they took to protect against identity theft. The company also agreed to provide identity protection services for two years and to reimburse another \$2.5 million (a max of \$10,000 per person) for those who could show unreimbursed loss as a result of the hack. Sony also had to foot the bill for more than \$2.5 million in attorneys' fees.

PIRACY PROBLEMS

In July 2016, *To Write Love on Her Arms* producer Possibility Pictures sued Sony, claiming the film was illegally distributed online as a result of the hack. Possibility claimed Sony violated a provision in its contract that requires it "to protect the Picture worldwide on the internet directly or through third party vendors, representatives or agents." That dispute settled in early 2018, and the details weren't released.

USA V. NORTH KOREA

The DOJ in September 2018 charged North Korean national Park Jin-hyok with conspiracy to commit computer fraud and conspiracy to commit wire fraud. They allege he was not only involved in the Sony hack, but also the 2017 WannaCry 2.0 global ransomware attack and "numerous other attacks or intrusions" on industries including entertainment, defense and utilities. Park, who also is alleged to be part of a government-sponsored hacking team known as the Lazarus Group, is on the FBI's most wanted list. North Korean officials have denied Park's existence and any responsibility for the hack.

finally laid out its 179-page criminal complaint, naming North Korea's Park Jin-hyok as the key player behind the attack. According to the document, the programmer also lived in China before the Sony breach, which FBI special agent Nathan Shields pinpoints as having happened in late September 2014, after the undisclosed February breach.

The idea of Russians idling in the system before and after the hack is never mentioned. The complaint concedes that "because of the harmful nature of the attack on SPE in which vast amounts of data were overwritten and computers were rendered unrecoverable, a complete reconstruction of the [hackers'] activities during the period of the intrusion was not possible through a forensic analysis." North Korea maintains Park does not exist.

Naysayers remain unimpressed by the government's evidence. "The Sony attack was just so loud and so clownish," says Carr, who sees "weaknesses" in the attribution. "There was nothing sophisticated about it. It's not what you think about with a nation-state that has a military arm that does cyberattacks."

Former News Corp. chief security officer Hemanshu Nigam says there are major holes in the theory that North Korea carried out the hack as payback for *The Interview*. "North Korea would have needed someone on the ground — an almost impossible-to-imagine scenario that also contradicts the criminal complaint — in order to exfiltrate that much data, including at least five full-length movies, without anyone noticing at Sony," he says. "From day one, I didn't believe this had the hallmarks of a nation-state, and I still don't. Pointing the finger at an enemy is the easy way out."

Also, as many former and current executives note, GoP never attempted to retaliate further with additional leaks when *The Interview* was released in theaters (albeit at small art houses rather than cineplexes) on Christmas Day 2014 and on streaming platforms. North Korea skeptics find that odd,



Above: An awkward moment between Angelina Jolie (left) and Sony's Amy Pascal at *THR*'s 2014 Women in Entertainment Breakfast, days after the hack revealed Jolie was disparaged in an email between Pascal and producer Scott Rudin (right). Far right: Hacked former Sony execs Michael Lynton (left) and Steve Mosko.

given that the group threatened 9/11-style attacks on movie theaters just days earlier.

(At the time, President Obama said the studio "made a mistake" when it pulled *The Interview* from theaters. "That statement from Obama was erroneous," says one former executive, noting that the studio was actively negotiating with smaller theaters to carry the movie at the time. "It was very difficult for people to hear that.")

Rogen finds the poorly worded GoP threat that invoked 9/11 to be off-key for a nation-state.

"That didn't seem like North Korea's M.O. That seemed more like young, amateurish hackers than like a foreign government launching a systematic attack on another country," he says, floating the possibility that someone used the North Korea narrative as cover. "What if it's someone started robbing a bank and someone else saw it was happening and decided they would jump in on it and weaponize it in a different way than it was meant to be weaponized? That's a conversation that we've had in trying to hypothesize what the fuck might've happened here."

While it's true that the crime itself was unsophisticated — a semi-competent hacker could have done it, given that servers had passwords like "sonypictures" — the rollout of the info indicated someone who understood showbiz players and practices well. Despite

the hackers' broken English (which could have been intentional), the media acumen on display strikes some as exceeding that of the hermit kingdom. "They would have needed someone with exceptional insider tribal knowledge of Hollywood in order to know what would damage reputations. You can't google that," says Nigam, who was once a federal prosecutor of online crime and now has his own firm that advises Hollywood entities.

The hackers knew exactly which journalists to approach and seemed to anticipate the media's reaction. The rollout of leaks also appeared to be strategically planned, peaking with the release of Mosko's and Pascal's inboxes followed by the movie theater threat.

Some skeptics say that pushing back on the government's narrative came with a reputational cost. Marc Rogers, who is head of security at famed hacking conference Defcon and a consultant on *Mr. Robot*, says he took heat from the government for knocking down the Pyongyang angle and noting that North Korean proxy IP addresses don't necessarily translate into a smoking gun.

"At least one official described me as either an idiot or someone trying to sell something," he says. "I literally have no dog in the fight. But when people start making statements about things that I know to be factually questionable, I find it often difficult to keep my mouth shut, so that's why I piped up. My original

3 OTHER NOTABLE HOLLYWOOD HACKS

Although many industry breaches never come to light, with companies quietly paying the ransoms demanded by the attackers, several are known



UTA

On April 11, 2017, UTA's IT department discovered that a cyber intruder had hacked the voicemail system and computer network, and the agency quickly shut down its systems, sending agents to conduct business on their iPads. Soon a demand from a hacker arrived: Pay a ransom or watch the agency's most confidential data be posted online. It was said to be one of at least a half-dozen extortion attempts against Hollywood firms around that time. UTA says no personal data of its clients or employees had been compromised.



statements weren't to say, 'No, the FBI is completely wrong.' It was to say, 'No, the evidence the FBI is pushing does not say what they're claiming it says.'"

In late December 2014, Kurt Stammberger, then senior vp at cybersecurity company Norse, was making the rounds of the news shows with findings from his firm's report that the attack was an inside job. "The thing that really lifted our eyebrows was, I was giving an interview on CNN, and [the anchor] says, 'I've talked to the FBI and the National Security director, and they say this report's a load of BS,'" Stammberger recalls. "I said, 'That's really interesting because we haven't even transmitted it to them yet.' They started basically trashing us before they had even seen the data."

Although the disgruntled-staffer angle generated headlines back in 2014, less explored is the prospect of someone using the hack as a weapon to manipulate the Sony share price. A number of investors sold large chunks of stock in 2014 between the supposed late September breach and the day the world learned of the attack on Nov. 24. There was also one spike in short-selling activity in the weeks leading up to Nov. 24. It is unclear if the SEC ever looked into Sony shortings or sell-offs given that SEC investigations are confidential unless it files an action in court.

Gabelli & Company's John Tinker, a Wall Street analyst who covers Sony, says the nefarious investor angle is possible and that it's happened before. For instance, there was an attempted bombing against a publicly traded German soccer team. "It was originally said to be terrorism," says Tinker. "But [investigators later said] it was someone who shorted the stock and had basically hoped to kill the team. The stock would collapse. There's some pretty weird people out there."

In any case, the hackers appeared to be bent on humiliating Sony, particularly Pascal, who was in the middle of negotiating her contract

renewal at the time of the hack. (Leaked emails showed Pascal making inappropriate jokes about President Obama and later fighting with Rudin.)

Sony fought to keep its composure as executive and talent salaries became public (the fact that Amy Adams and Jennifer Lawrence made

groove back (the stock is now triple what it was at the time of the hack, trading at \$62.13). But in an increasingly data-driven industry, the attack provided a wake-up call for the rest of Hollywood. Timothy Toohey, who heads up Greenberg Glusker's cybersecurity practice, says the studios all the way down to the

"THEY WOULD HAVE NEEDED SOMEONE WITH EXCEPTIONAL INSIDER TRIBAL KNOWLEDGE OF HOLLYWOOD. YOU CAN'T GOOGLE THAT."

less than their male co-stars in *American Hustle* became a Hollywood rallying cry).

Internally, fear reigned. Top executives were given old BlackBerry's that had been stored in the basement of the Thalberg Building. Pascal enlisted a nurse to give sleep-deprived staffers B12 shots. Another former executive says he hired a private investigator after being hacked multiple times following the 2014 incursion.

Rival studios shunned Sony executives and wouldn't take their calls, one former president notes. "They wouldn't open our emails," he says. "They thought they'd be infected."

As a sign of their resilience, staffers created a video of how they were carrying on. The Sony legal team advised that it should not be released to the public. "It was extraordinary that every single employee stepped up, and in the end, we got through it. In a strange way, it was our finest moment," says Mosko. "But the video was buried. No one wanted to tell that story."

The studio has never assigned a final dollar figure to losses from the attack, but in a 2015 earnings report, Sony said it would cost \$35 million for the "investigation and remediation" for the full fiscal year (that tally did not include lawsuits). SPE's Japanese parent company finally seems to have gotten its

smallest vendors have strengthened their firewalls in response to the Sony fallout.

"Reporting structures have improved. The internal management of security and privacy issues has improved. They've devoted more resources to the issue. But there's no such thing as perfect security," he says. "Could it happen again? Absolutely."

Attorney Bryan Freedman, who represented several parties affected by the Sony hack, says studios share an ethical responsibility to work together to prevent it from happening again. "From an industry standpoint, I'm not sure enough has been done in terms of collective coordination," says Freedman. "While you do hear more about cybersecurity, it's not a topic that's readily discussed as a group with law firms, studios, talent agencies and management companies all participating."

Whether or not the government ever arrests Park (if he exists), there likely will always be those who hold on to their doubts.

For his part, Rogen has moved on, even if he's still a bit curious about what really went down. "It would be nice to know the truth," he says. "I don't think I would feel drastically different on a personal level if it was or wasn't North Korea. I do think other people would probably feel vindicated." **THR**

NETFLIX

Sometime in late 2016, a hacker collective known as TheDarkOverlord breached the network of postproduction facility Larson Studios and stole unaired episodes of Netflix's *Orange Is the New Black*, CBS' *NCIS: Los Angeles*, Fox's *New Girl* and IFC's *Portlandia*. In March 2017, TheDarkOverlord demanded a ransom of 50 bitcoin (roughly \$60,000 at the time) by an April 30, 2017, deadline. Netflix never responded to the hackers (it's unknown if the other networks paid up), and two days before the deadline, TheDarkOverlord posted the first of 10 episodes of season five of *Orange Is the New Black* on Pirate Bay.



HBO

On July 27, 2017, HBO became the victim of a coordinated cyberattack in which a staggering 1.5 terabytes of data was pilfered from the company's servers. In a letter addressed to former CEO Richard Plepler, the hackers warned: "We successfully breached into your huge network. ... HBO was one of our difficult targets to deal with but we succeeded (it took about 6 months)." Going by the name of Mr. Smith, the hackers demanded money (though the figure was redacted in the version of the letter *THR* viewed at the time) and claimed that HBO was their 17th target. Mr. Smith released everything from a script summary of an upcoming *Game of Thrones* episode to a month's worth of emails from the inbox of one of the company's production executives, as well as unaired episodes of *Ballers*, *Insecure* and *Room 104*. Nearly five months later, federal prosecutors pinned the theft on an Iranian military hacker.

*"Maybe it's
a form of
self-hatred,
but I prefer
to write
people I don't
agree with."*
→

→
*"Once you're
in a position
of power,
you're facing
different
people who
are treating
you
differently."*

←
*"It feels like I am going
to die. I tell my wife, 'Don't ever
let me do this again.'"*



‘FICTION MEANS FREEDOM, AND WE HAVE TO FIGHT FOR THAT’

By
STEPHEN GALLOWAY

Photographed
by
SAMI DRASIN

“This is one of the few times I have written a script where I don’t remember doing it,” says Taika Waititi (far right) about *Jojo Rabbit*. He was photographed Oct. 14 at Line 204 in Los Angeles with (from left) Destin Daniel Cretton, Charles Randolph, Kasi Lemmons, Lorene Scafaria and Anthony McCarten.



Roger Ailes. Harriet Tubman. Hitler. These are three of the real-life characters who feature conspicuously in the current awards-season movies, a thicker slice of historical fiction than at any time in the recent past. What's striking about these men and women is how differently they've been treated —

from the meticulous re-creation of the former slave's life in *Harriet*, by Kasi Lemmons, 58; to the blend of fact and fiction in the living pontiffs' meetings from Anthony McCarten, 58, in *The Two Popes*; to the comical portrait of Hitler by Taika Waititi, 44, in *Jojo Rabbit*. These screenwriters were joined at this year's Writer Roundtable by three others who've tackled real life with varying degrees of fictionalizing: Destin Daniel Cretton, 41 (whose *Just Mercy* tells the tale of attorney Bryan Stevenson's attempt to free a wrongfully convicted prisoner), Charles Randolph, 56 (whose *Bombshell* looks at former Fox News chairman Ailes and the women who brought him down), and Lorene Scafaria, 41 (whose *Hustlers* is a fact-based narrative about a handful of strippers who stole money from their clients).

Are there any subjects that you wouldn't touch today that you might have a few years ago?

CHARLES RANDOLPH The model of appropriation for a screenwriter is complicated. Because, on one hand, you want to have a rich variety of characters in your films, and on the other, if you are wholly embodying a subject that is alien to your culture, you feel like there are other people who can do it better than you. There are things that I wouldn't do today. There's an adaptation of a book about

three African American kids in New York who kidnap a white state attorney [*The Birthday Party: A Memoir of Survival* by Stanley N. Alpert] that I wrote a decade ago that's one of my favorite scripts. It will never get made and probably shouldn't get made. It relies too much on me being in a world that I don't fully understand. And no amount of research would get me there.

KASI LEMMONS One thing we have to understand is that the language of the dominant culture is one we all speak. But there are specific cultures that we don't, where you'd have to be versed in those languages. You have to do the work to figure out what that is.

ANTHONY MCCARTEN Freedom is the operative word. Fiction means freedom, and we have to fight for that. Writers must be free to travel. We have to have passports into every territory. If we'd pigeonholed ourselves by saying, "I can only write about being a middle-aged white man," Shakespeare would never have written about anything outside England. We would never have had *The Merchant of Venice*. He was not a merchant, never went to Venice. We have to fight for that against some strong headwinds. There's opposition to writers who imaginatively journey into a world they don't know, but that they want to know, and they're not backed by people who are saying, "You are not of that

culture. Get back in your box."

LEMMONS Don't you agree you can't be just a tourist, though? You have to do some immersive work.

MCCARTEN Wholeheartedly agree with you. You can't flippantly go in. But isn't that true for every character you do?

LEMMONS It is. But some are more challenging than others. So much great work has been written by so many people. As a writer you should be able to explore humanity and be —

MCCARTEN — borderless.

What are your responsibilities to the factual truth? Taika, is it OK to fictionalize Hitler?

TAIKA WAITITI That version of Hitler that I wrote shares nothing with the real guy other than that mustache, because he is conjured from the mind of a 10-year-old, so he can only know what a 10-year-old knows. I had no interest in writing an authentic portrayal, even though I played him, too. Because I just didn't think he deserved it. And I didn't want to give him the satisfaction of me actually having to read about him and study his nuances and mannerisms. I was like, "Screw this guy. I'm not going to do that."

MCCARTEN Can we put your feet to the fire a bit on that one? Because it is Hitler. We identify him as Hitler. Would you not agree that a lot of the power of the jokes derives from the fact that the voice in this boy's ear is Hitler?

WAITITI Absolutely. It's funny because [a boy's] ideas are coming out of the mouth of this tyrant.

MCCARTEN You make the serious unserious. That's how you skewer power. That's the nature of satire.

LEMMONS What's scary is that a child's view is cartoonish and there is this cartoon friend that's an extremely dangerous person. It makes you understand indoctrination of children.

Destin, what liberties with the truth did you take in *Just Mercy*?

DESTIN DANIEL CRETTON We, fortunately, did not have to take many. Bryan Stevenson was helpful in filling in gaps. We created the dialogue in the scenes, but we didn't have to make up events. We did shift things around.

WAITITI Even documentaries [do that].

LEMMONS It's a story.

Lorene, how much did you stick to the real characters in *Hustlers*?

LORENE SCAFARIA I didn't get a chance to meet the real women ahead of time, which was hard, because creatively I'd have loved to have heard every detail, and truth is stranger than fiction. But I had the article [on which the film is based, *The Hustlers at Scores* by Jessica Pressler] and so I felt a responsibility to what happened. I didn't want to water the crimes down, but I felt a bit of freedom because we were there to tell the movie version of a story. It's kind of a love story between [two of the women] and, in reality, they were more like business partners.

You went to strip clubs for research. What surprised you?

SCAFARIA There's no job security for these women. They are not employees. They pay house fees. They tip everybody [they work with]. So the difference between a good night and a bad night is a lot. It's not, "Did you have a great or bad interaction with someone?" It's, "Did you go home with minimum wage?"

Did you like the women you met?

SCAFARIA A lot. I feel a real kinship:

ANTHONY MCCARTEN
The Two Popes



DESTIN DANIEL CRETTON
Just Mercy

A portrait of Destin Daniel Cretton, a man with dark hair and a slight beard, wearing a dark blue blazer over a dark blue button-down shirt. He is standing against a background of orange curtains and an orange wall.

PREVIOUS SPREAD, SET DESIGN BY LISA BAZADONA, HAIR BY SU-HAN AT DEW BEAUTY AGENCY, MAKEUP BY APRIL BAUTISTA AT DEW BEAUTY AGENCY, MAKEUP BY LOUISE MAIR, SCARFATTA HAIR BY SUNNIE BROOK AT FORWARD ARTISTS, MAKEUP BY TOBY FLEISHMAN AT TOMLINSON MANAGEMENT, LEMMONS HAIR AND MAKEUP BY TERENCE CHAIERS, COTTON GROOMING BY ALEXA HERNANDEZ AT FORWARD ARTISTS, ON-SET BY JARDINE HAMMOND.

RANDOLPH Wow.

SCAFARIA It was remarkable. And another guy was on a headset for

WRITER ROUNDTABLE

Charles, did you ever meet the real Fox News characters you write about?

RANDOLPH I did not meet Roger Ailes. He died when I was about halfway through [the script]. I did meet quite a few of the others [including many of the women Ailes harassed], 12 or 13 of whom have NDAs so we can't talk about who they were.

Did they talk to you despite the NDAs?

RANDOLPH Yes. Generally speaking, the female characters were so much easier to write than the males, because so many women had raised their hand and in great, granular detail said: "This is exactly what happened to me. This is the power dynamic behind it." Whereas obviously the guy who is the perpetrator doesn't raise his hand. Fortunately, Roger had been the subject of a great deal of very good journalism.

MCCARTEN When you are writing a character whose views roughly align with your own, it's much more effortless. And then you have to write a character whom you have no empathy for. And yet we have to love our characters equally. How do you write empathetically for someone you don't have any instinct for?

RANDOLPH I prefer it. Maybe it's a form of self-hatred, but I prefer to write people I don't agree with. Because I can "turn" the scene so many more times. I have an instinct to counter their ideas, and then force myself to go back and do that tit-for-tat. I much prefer it.

MCCARTEN Does it change your view of that person?

RANDOLPH Anytime you write a human being, it does some — "normalizing" is too strong a word, but it does give you an empathetic relationship to their place in the world.

WAITITI My favorite characters are ones who are desperate to be liked. Or to be loved and to be accepted or cool and who are overcompensating so much that they become horrible. I like writing horrible people who aren't necessarily villains but are trying hard to have an opinion. I find them really fun to write.

SCAFARIA Writing is an exercise in empathy. So I tend to prefer characters that I don't necessarily agree with. And I like making them convince me a little bit.

Was there anything to like about Roger Ailes?

RANDOLPH Yeah. Roger was genuinely beloved by a lot of people and even by lefties. And so he was someone whose capacity for seduction was pretty profound. He wasn't Harvey Weinstein.

Did you ever have any encounters with Weinstein?

RANDOLPH I never had a good experience with him. I don't know a lot of people who have real love for Harvey. Even 10 years ago, I didn't know a lot of people.

Anthony, you refused to work for him. Why?

MCCARTEN It was — I don't know what — some sort of compass that just said, "Danger, Will Robinson!" It was my self-defense mechanism that kicked in.

Is the industry an easier place to work today?

LEMMONS I haven't worked with a screamer in a long time. But I know they are out there. When I was an actor, I worked with somebody who was just cranky. He yelled at so many people. You know: "Was that OK?" "Yeah, I would have yelled at you if it wasn't!" But is it a gentler business? I don't know.

RANDOLPH On the business side, there are women in the room now. There weren't 10, 20 years ago.

WAITITI I feel it's easier now. Especially with the web, it's so much easier for people to speak out. "This person just screamed at me." People won't stand for it.

SCAFARIA I wonder if it's just changed for us sitting at this table, because recently I was not sitting at tables and it's not easy when you're not in a position of power. Once you are in a position of power, you might be facing different people who are treating you differently.

Since *Hustlers*, have people been treating you differently?

SCAFARIA Yes. My agent came over the other day. *(Laughter.)*

TAIKA WAITITI
Jojo Rabbit



What do you all think about the WGA/agency war?

MCCARTEN We want it to be resolved as quickly as possible. I stand with the Writers Guild.

WAITITI I want a quick resolution. I'm too stressed out to have to think about stuff like this. Finishing a film and getting it out there, that's the stress relief.

CRETTON I'm in prep on a movie and I get anxious anytime I am leading up to a project. It feels like I am going to die. I tell my wife, "Don't ever let me do this again." But it is like how my wife describes childbirth. The memory of it becomes so beautiful that I'm like, "Yes, let's do this again."

Does writing relieve stress?

CRETTON I find writing very stressful. I find it psychologically damaging and challenging because I have so much room for self-doubt. It's different on set. You're just like, "Boom, boom."

SCAFARIA I find it freeing. I've been doing it since I was a kid. I was writing scripts when I was in fourth grade, attempts at screenplays. But it's definitely lonely.

WAITITI I've always found it lonely, but my favorite thing is, after people have gone to bed, I don't have to talk to anyone ...

SCAFARIA That's right!

WAITITI ... and I come up with ideas. Starting with that blank page, you're just feeling, "Oh my



TUNE IN ON TV

THR Oscar Roundtables will roll out through December in print and online. Then watch them as new episodes of *Close Up With The Hollywood Reporter* starting Jan. 5 on SundanceTV — and look for video highlights at THR.com/Roundtables and extended episodes on THR.com after broadcast.

God, I've got 120 of these to fill up!" (*Laughter*.) But when I've got a flow going on, it's amazing.

When you write, do you start at the beginning?

WAITITI This is one of the few times I have written a script where I don't remember doing it. Usually I start in various places, and often at the end. Then maybe a bit at the beginning. Then sort of figure it out. This one, I just went from the beginning all the way through in a linear fashion and I don't know how it happened. It's inspired by a book called *Caging Skies* [by Christine Leunens] and the book is a much darker relationship drama about this boy and girl. So I had to add on things that are specific to how I tell stories, which is with humor, fantastical elements, little heightened moments and this imaginary character. None of that was in the book.

SCAFARIA I jump around, too. For *Hustlers*, I wrote the scene where Jennifer Lopez's character wraps Constance Wu's character in a fur coat. That was the first scene that I wrote and the last thing we shot.

Name a writer who's shaped you.

LEMMONS The late, great Toni Morrison had such a profound effect on my worldview in terms of literature and African American literature and the way that I approached character.

MCCARTEN I wasn't a writer until I sat in on an English literature course. I was keen on a girl and followed her into this room. Sat beside her and asked if I could have a look at her text. Soon she was the mother of my first child. The book was *The Norton Anthology of American Literature Since 1945*. I started reading it and it was a real epiphany because it said to a somewhat working-class kid from Taranaki, New Zealand, that you didn't have to be a professor to be a writer. You could write about the domestic, you could write about the banal. But you had to do it with passion and insight.

RANDOLPH Often, in association with a project, I will fall in love with a writer. Currently, I rely a lot on Anthony Appiah's work, just because his worldview is so delightful for this chaotic time.

SCAFARIA I wish I read more. I grew up loving plays — Sam Shepard — and then I loved [novelist] Anthony Burgess.

WAITITI Oscar Wilde is the guy I have gone back to. The humor and the wit. And he's just cheeky.

CRETTON I struggled with writing, growing up. I have never considered myself smart enough to write. I have tried to be as vulnerable as I can through the writing that I do. The last two movies that I have written and directed, I was 100 percent inspired by the people who wrote those memoirs [*Just Mercy* and *The Glass Castle*].

If you could change one thing in the industry, what would it be?

LEMMONS [It would relate to]

Larson came to our set and said it's the first time she has ever been in the minority on a set. I hope that happens more.

SCAFARIA I would love to see more diversity in the finance department, because money makes the world go around. In 2008, the financial crisis had such a large effect on the movies that were getting made. Cynicism took over and in a way these superhero films are a response to that cynicism. There are a lot of epic stories that don't necessarily fall into that category.

WAITITI Disagree.

LEMMONS Disagree.

WAITITI Having worked for Marvel, I know how much work goes into breaking stories for those films, the shooting and the postproduction. It's all based on story and affecting people emotionally. Maybe it's too colorful for him.

MCCARTEN I can only imagine he's worried about the dominance of that type of film. That's just the economics of it. We need to come up with stories that make an economic case to say, "There is a



CHARLES RANDOLPH
Bombshell



KASI LEMMONS
Harriet

inclusiveness and parity. Other places are doing much better at it than we are — France, for instance. Film has to be a time capsule for who we are now and what we are interested in, and it doesn't feel that way yet. It's a real tragedy that for so many years [there's been] a predominance of white men. It's out of step with reality.

CRETTON Our movie was the first movie that Warner Bros. officially did the inclusion rider for [a contractual guarantee of diversity on the production] and it allowed us to hire department heads who were African American women, who've been doing amazing work for 30 years and have never been a department head before. Brie

Which of your characters would you like to be with on a desert island?

MCCARTEN Freddie Mercury [whose story was the basis of McCarten's *Bohemian Rhapsody*]. He'd be way more fun than anyone else. He'd show me something about living passionately. That guy burned, and for a quiet writer that's probably the best life lesson.

RANDOLPH [Investor] Steve Eisman from *The Big Short*. He would certainly not stop talking.

SCAFARIA Not my film, but Jojo maybe. Seems like a cool kid.

WAITITI Thor. 'Cause he is a really fun guy. He's my mate.

Martin Scorsese says superhero films are theme park rides. Agree?

massive audience for this."

SCAFARIA They say the movie star is dead, but it's often a combination of the actor and the character. That's what *Iron Man* did: It was Robert Downey Jr. as Iron Man. That's what people might turn out for more.

WAITITI Comics and graphic novels, people have always laughed at them as not being real art or real stories. It's simply not true. Superheroes are our new mythology. At the end of the day, stories are either teaching us lessons or helping us experience the human condition in different ways.

Interview edited for length and clarity.

Once relegated to working in semi-obscurity on regional broadcasters, international content creators for the small screen are riding a streaming-age wave of demand for locally produced series that are connecting with audiences from Mumbai to Mexico City — and they don't have to play by Hollywood's rules: 'We can imagine almost everything and then we can see it realized onscreen'

By
**SCOTT
ROXBOROUGH**



Illustration
By
**DAVE
VAN PATTEN**

MEET THE TOP INTERNATIONAL SHOWRUNNERS IN TELEVISION



As the streaming wars heat up, the future of TV is now decidedly global.

The boom in international programming that's engulfing the small screen began, of course, with Netflix. With 50 percent more subscribers outside the U.S. (98 million) than within it (61 million), the streaming giant is ordering almost as many new series from abroad as it is stateside. In Europe alone the streamer has significantly increased the number of productions this year, with 221 projects — including 153 originals — in the works, representing a more than 50 percent increase on 2018.

This has led to a global arms race to secure talent, which in turn has translated into major career boosts — and windfalls — for creators of content overseas. And while international showrunners may not be seeing the paydays of a Ryan Murphy (\$300 million from Netflix) or Greg Berlanti (\$400 million to stay at Warner Bros. TV), they are nevertheless signing deals worth far more than just five years ago, when most would have had to settle for toiling in semi-obscurity on local terrestrial broadcasters. Amazon signed a \$60 million deal with British Emmy darling Phoebe Waller-Bridge (*Fleabag*, *Killing Eve*); Netflix has inked multiyear development agreements with the likes of Spanish showrunner Álex Pina (*Money Heist*) and German duo Jantje Friese and Baran bo Odar (*Dark*); and Apple TV+ shelled out big to secure top Brit talents like Steven Knight (for the postapocalyptic drama *See*) and Neil Cross (for lit adaptation *The Mosquito Coast*).

Accolades, too, have followed, both at the International Emmys — *Money Heist* won best drama last year, while India's *Sacred Games* competes in the category this year — and at the U.S. Emmys, which this year

included some 40 nominations for shows created outside the U.S.

But things are still far from equal among writers in the U.S. and abroad. International showrunners typically have weak or nonexistent writers unions, less aggressive (and less powerful) agents in their corner, and a production model that favors full broadcaster buyouts with zero backend. American-style writers rooms are still the exception worldwide — most of the talents on *THR*'s inaugural list of top international showrunners write every single script for every show they make. Head writers and creators who earn full producer credits on their shows — the American definition of a showrunner — remain a rare breed internationally.

With global players pushing budgets ever higher — some of the Marvel TV series on Disney+ will cost as much as \$25 million an episode — regional showrunners worry how they will compete by “making HBO-style shows on a BBC 4 budget” and how they can keep their below-the-line talent from jumping ship to the next Netflix, Amazon or Apple series that comes calling. “We’re running out of people,” moans one Brit writer-producer.

But the cosmopolitan scribes on *THR*'s list — which was compiled based on input from producers, acquisition execs and content creators around the world — still feel confident television's global push will deliver more diverse, compelling and surprising TV as Hollywood finally broadens its horizons.

PEDRO AGUILERA

3% BRAZIL

In 2016, Aguilera's futuristic vision of a divided society, where impoverished 20-year-olds compete to be one of the three percent allowed to leave Earth to live in a paradise called “Offshore,” sparked a trend for international dystopian dramas at commissioning studio Netflix, with series like Denmark's *The Rain* and *Leila* in India tapping a similar vein of socially relevant sci-fi.

GARY ALAZRAKI, MICHAEL LAM

Club de Cuervos MEXICO

To make their comedy-drama *Club de Cuervos* — what Mexican director Alazraki and American writer-producer Lam call “*Game of Thrones* set in the world of soccer” — the duo teamed up with *Californication* producer (and soccer

neophyte) Jay Dyer. The story of family, power and intrigue, which moves smoothly from laugh-out-loud comedy to heartfelt drama, launched Netflix's Latino originals explosion.

THE SERIES MOST DISCUSSED AMONG FELLOW TV WRITERS?

Alazraki: *Succession* and *Fleabag*

ONE INDUSTRY TREND I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE GO AWAY

Lam: I'm not sure if I can't wait to see it go away, but I think there's a slight over-reliance on superhero comic books as source material.

MANOLO CARO

The House of Flowers MEXICO

A Mexican John Waters with (slightly) more mainstream taste, writer-director Caro has a knack for creating unconventional romantic comedies that dance on the edge of the absurd and mix telenovela plots with a sharp ear for dialogue and a stand-up's sense of timing. After a string of local box office hits, Caro's TV debut, *The House of Flowers*, which he wrote, directed and produced, became the top Mexican series on Netflix, which led to an exclusive four-year deal between the streaming giant and the Latino multihyphenate.

THE RECENT SHOW I CAN'T STOP WATCHING

Euphoria. Lately I don't have a lot of time to watch TV, but this show hooked me completely.

HOW I KNOW I'M NOT WORKING IN AMERICA

My English doesn't need to be perfect to do the shows that I want to do. The world has changed and you can be in any country and still have a global impact.

CHARLIE COVELL

The End of the F***ing World U.K.

When Covell adapted Charles Forsman's cult comic *The End of the F***ing World* for Channel 4 in the U.K., she thought she was making a “small, niche” and very British dark comedy that, if she was lucky, would find a small audience and “a few nice reviews.” Instead, the modern-day Bonnie and Clyde tale, seasoned with dry sarcasm, was picked up by Netflix, nabbed an Emmy nom and scored Covell a deal for *Kaos*, a new Netflix series billed as a reimagining of Greek mythology exploring contemporary gender politics and power.



Aguilera



Alazraki



Lam



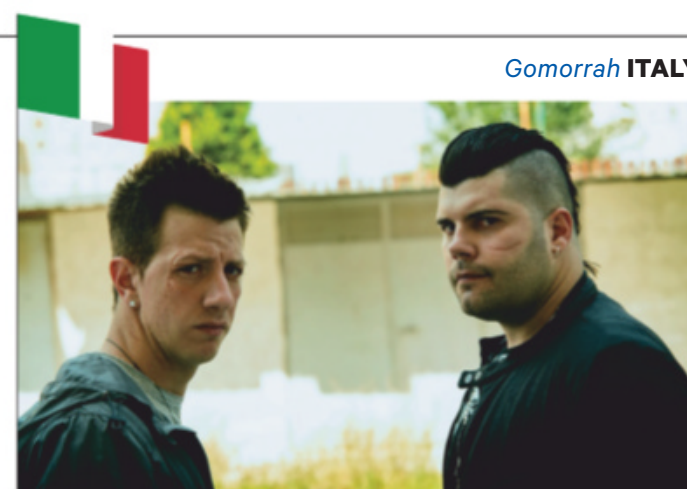
Covell



3% BRAZIL



Mr. Sunshine SOUTH KOREA



Gomorrah ITALY



Peter Morgan (above right) on the set of *The Crown*, which added Oscar winner Olivia Colman (right) to the cast this year.



Cross

THE WRITER-PRODUCER I'D TRADE PLACES WITH FOR A DAY

Damon Lindelof. And I would spend that day buying treats and congratulating myself for creating one of the most perfect TV shows in recent memory — *The Leftovers*.

WHAT HOLLYWOOD COULD LEARN FROM MY WAY OF MAKING TV

Nothing. I don't know what I'm doing.



Davies

NEIL CROSS

Luther U.K.

Cross cut his drama teeth on the Brit series *Spooks* and *The Fixer*, as well as a couple of spec scripts for *Doctor Who*, before getting dark and nasty with Idris Elba as a dirty, driven cop in the psychological crime drama *Luther*. The show, which wrapped its fifth (and likely last) season this year, garnered 11 Emmy nominations and one Golden Globe win (for Elba) in its nine-year run. Cross' full slate includes the limited series *Because the Night*, adapted from his own novel, for Brit network ITV, and upcoming Apple TV+ drama *The Mosquito Coast*, starring Justin Theroux.

WHAT HOLLYWOOD COULD LEARN FROM MY WAY OF MAKING TV

For what it's worth, I believe writers rooms to be quite staggeringly inefficient. But I'm also aware this is partly a function of my chronic disorganization, my impatience and my desire to actually be writing.

MY MOST LOST-IN-TRANSLATION MOMENT WITH A U.S. CHANNEL OR EXECUTIVE

One day, deep in the Death Star corridors at Fox, I was breezily invited to "come meet

Rupert." I theatrically shivered as if the temperature had precipitously dropped and did my (pretty good) impression of Gary Oldman's Dracula. At which point I was whisked away by a cluster of senior executives who suddenly started acting like presidential bodyguards. Swear to God, my feet didn't touch the ground.

RUSSELL T. DAVIES

Years and Years U.K.

Having resurrected *Doctor Who* from the doldrums in the mid-aughts, Davies holds something akin to godlike status in the U.K. This year he headed toward something more dystopian: *Years and Years*, a terrifyingly close-to-reality miniseries following a British family as the U.K. succumbs to populism and xenophobia. The series delivered middling ratings for the BBC and, later, for HBO, which aired it two months after its U.K. bow, but its brutally nihilistic view of the future, leavened by Davies' very British humor, made it a critical hit on both sides of the Atlantic.

HOW THE GOLDEN ERA OF TV HAS IMPACTED BUDGETS

I've never made big-budget shows, so it's hard to staff small and mid-budget shows. I mean, good luck to those who can earn twice as much on a big streaming drama ... but we're running out of people.

HOW I KNOW I'M NOT WORKING IN AMERICA

Significantly less testosterone.

LEONARDO FASOLI, MADDALENA RAVAGLI

Gomorra ITALY

Any show that counts both Madonna and

Ricky Gervais among its fans has to be doing something right, and gritty Mafia drama *Gomorra* has been a mob-style hit, both for Sky Italia, where it draws more local viewers than *Game of Thrones*, and globally: The show has sold to more than 30 territories, including to SundanceTV in the U.S. The pair continued their crime wave with the cocaine trafficking drama *ZeroZeroZero* for Amazon, CanalPlus and Sky, which will appear in the U.S. next year.

THE RECENT SHOW I COULDN'T

STOP WATCHING

Fasoli: *Chernobyl*

Ravagli: *True Detective* season three

HOW THE GOLDEN ERA OF TV HAS IMPACTED THE BUDGETS

Fasoli: Now we can imagine almost everything, and then we can see it realized onscreen.

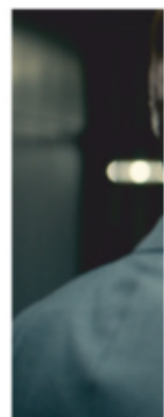
JANTJE FRIESE AND BARAN BO ODAR

Dark GERMANY

Husband-and-wife writing team Friese and bo Odar broke the language barrier with *Dark*, a time-traveling mystery that plays like a German *Stranger Things* meets *Donnie Darko*. Netflix reports that 90 percent of the global audience for *Dark* is watching outside Germany. That cross-border success led Netflix to sign Friese and bo Odar to a multi-year overall development deal, the company's first in Europe.

WHAT HOLLYWOOD COULD LEARN FROM OUR WAY OF MAKING TV

Friese: Don't underestimate the intelligence of your audience.



HOW WE KNOW WE'RE NOT WORKING IN AMERICA

Bo Odar: The extras are way better in Hollywood than in Germany.

MARK GATISS, STEVEN MOFFAT

Sherlock, Dr. Who U.K.

Practically royalty in British TV circles thanks to *Sherlock*, which they co-created, and their work on *Doctor Who* (Moffat was showrunner from 2009 to 2016, and Gatiss wrote nine episodes), the creative duo are now ready to unleash their latest collaboration, *Dracula*, a BBC-Netflix co-production. It sees Danish star Claes Bang (*The Square*) don the bloodied fangs of the famed vampire.

THE RECENT SHOW WE COULDN'T STOP WATCHING

Gatiss: *Succession*. They're all so venal it's interesting to see which characters you like. Moffat: Just got into *Schitt's Creek* and rather love it.

WHAT HOLLYWOOD COULD LEARN FROM OUR WAY OF MAKING TV

Gatiss: There's so much sensational U.S. TV, it seems churlish to comment, but there is great virtue in having a very small, tightly knit creative team with a vision.

VARUN GROVER, VIKRAMADITYA MOTWANE

Sacred Games INDIA

Grover and Motwane brought a decidedly un-Bollywood aesthetic to *Sacred Games*, Netflix's first Indian original, mixing humor — Grover is a stand-up star in Mumbai — with a gritty look at capital-city politics. The show's reported \$14 million budget for season two dwarfs anything seen on the subcontinent, but it's paid off — Netflix says it's the most successful show in India (surpassing even *Stranger Things*) and one of the streamer's top non-English titles worldwide.

WHAT HOLLYWOOD COULD LEARN FROM OUR WAY OF MAKING TV

Grover: A lot of Hollywood works on surveys and research; we go more by gut feel.

ONE INDUSTRY TREND WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE GO AWAY

Motwane: Overdependence on data.

Grover: When networks become greedy and keep extending shows, such as *Game of Thrones* going into multiple seasons, it kind of loses its charm.

HENK HANDLOEGTEN, TOM TYKWER, ACHIM VON BORRIES

Babylon Berlin GERMANY

Brad Pitt and Leonardo DiCaprio are fans of this crime epic set in pre-World War II Germany. Public broadcaster ARD, pay TV



According to Netflix, 90 percent of the audience for the German drama *Dark*, from Baran bo Odar (left) and Jantje Friese, came from overseas.



From left: Obama, Hamm, Rowland and Ramirez



FAMOUS FANS AND THE FOREIGN SHOWS THEY LOVE

The international explosion of prestige TV has made binge viewers of everyone from Mick Jagger to Barack Obama

The End of the F***ing World JON HAMM

"He came up and told me he loved *TEOTFW*," says Charlie Covell. "I quietly lost my mind and shook his hand far longer than I think is acceptable."

Fauda HENRY WINKLER

"He was my hero when I was young," says Lior Raz. "We connected after he watched my show, and we became good friends."

Gentleman Jack MICK JAGGER

Says creator Sally Wainwright, "I suppose even rock stars have to watch telly now and again."

Sacred Games SHAH RUKH KHAN "I didn't think he had the time to watch it!" says co-creator Vikramaditya Motwane.

Luther BARACK OBAMA "Idris [Elba] called me from the White House to tell me Obama was a fan," says Neil Cross. "This is the kind of place from which Idris calls me, and the kind of party to which I'm never invited."

Derry Girls LIAM GALLAGHER of Oasis "Liam Neeson is a fan, but that could just be local loyalty," says Lisa McGee. "Liam Gallagher was a shock! Maybe all Liams have a thing for the Derry accent."

The House of Flowers EDGAR RAMÍREZ "Thanks to the show we have become friends," says Manolo Caro.

3% SAME EMAIL Mr. Robot showrunner "This one shook me up," says Pedro Aguilera. "He put 3% in his top 10 series of 2016, and that was pretty exciting."

Sex Education KELLY ROWLAND of Destiny's Child "My inner 16-year-old can die happy now," says Laurie Nunn.

network Sky and Netflix, which holds international streaming rights, split the bill for *Babylon*, which set a new high-water mark for a non-English language series with a budget of \$45 million for the first two seasons.

THE WRITER-PRODUCER WE'D TRADE PLACES WITH FOR A DAY

Tykwer: David Lynch

Handloegten: Matthew Weiner, circa 2012

MOST LOST-IN-TRANSLATION MOMENT WITH A U.S. CHANNEL OR EXECUTIVE

Handloegten: The entire American dubbing of *Babylon Berlin*. Absolutely horrible. Please watch the subtitles.

AVI ISSACHAROFF, LIOR RAZ

Fauda ISRAEL

Real life helped write the script for Israeli drama *Fauda*, with *Haaretz* journalist Issacharoff and former counterterrorist commando Raz using their eyewitness expertise to shape the political thriller, starring Raz as an Israeli soldier undercover among Palestinian terrorists. A critical hit at home and abroad — where it was the first Israeli series to be picked up as a Netflix original — *Fauda* is now set for its first international remake in, of all places, India. And the duo is filming their first English-language series, *Hit and Run*, for Netflix.

HOW WE KNOW WE'RE NOT WORKING IN AMERICA

Issacharoff: When people are not politically correct, and they yell and curse each other and everyone's fine with that.

WHAT HOLLYWOOD COULD LEARN FROM OUR WAY OF MAKING TV



Motwane



Handloegten



Tykwer



von Borries



Issacharoff



Raz



Kim



Knight



Dan Levy



Eugene Levy



Madrona



Montero



McGee

Raz: In Israel, we work fast and with a low budget. Since we don't have high budgets, we concentrate more on the story and the characters.

KIM EUN-SOOK

Mr. Sunshine SOUTH KOREA

Kim is a brand all her own in South Korea, where her slick and glossy rom-coms, featuring His Girl Friday-style banter, have become an indelible part of the local pop culture. The SBS Drama Awards, Korea's version of the Emmys, gave her a lifetime achievement honor in 2012, when she was just 39. Her latest, the 1900s period romance Mr. Sunshine, drew an 18 percent rating for local channel tvN, making it the fourth-most-successful cable show of all time in Korea. It was snapped up by Netflix internationally.

STEVEN KNIGHT

Peaky Blinders U.K.

Knight's career in TV ranges from '90s game show sensation Who Wants to Be a Millionaire (which he co-created) to the 19th century gang warfare of BBC's global hit Peaky Blinders (director Michael Mann, the novelist Dennis Lehane and rapper Snoop Dogg are among the show's most rabid fans). The prolific scribe is following it up with the sci-fi dystopia See, starring Jason Momoa (for Apple TV+), and a new take on A Christmas Carol (for FX Networks and the BBC, producers of Knight-created series Taboo).

STRANGEST NOTE FROM A CHANNEL OR NETWORK EXEC

"Can we slow the pace down a bit ...?"

THE BEST PIECE OF WRITING ADVICE I EVER RECEIVED

"Finish it, then make it better" (from Stephen Frears).

DAN LEVY, EUGENE LEVY

Schitt's Creek CANADA

The slow-burn comedy from the Canadian father-and-son acting-writing dream team (Dad's an SCTV comedy legend, son Dan is a former MTV Canada host) won over critics in its fifth, and penultimate, season, earning four Emmy nominations (the sixth season debuts in January). Dan Levy will segue from the show to ABC Studios, where he has signed a three-year production and development deal.

DARÍO MADRONA, CARLOS MONTERO

Elite SPAIN

Season two of Elite, Madrona and Montero's high school thriller which pits a trio of working class girls against the rich clique of Spain's most exclusive private school, was watched by more than 20 million Netflix households within a month of its global Sept. 6 bow, according to the streamer. Netflix quickly ordered a third season of the

addictive guilty pleasure, which plays like a mashup of Gossip Girl and Riverdale — with a lot more sex.

THE WRITER-PRODUCER WE'D TRADE PLACES WITH FOR A DAY

Madrona: Greg Berlanti. Just to see how he does it.

ONE INDUSTRY TREND WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE GO AWAY

Madrona: TV shows as eight-hour-long movies.

LISA MCGEE

Derry Girls U.K.

McGee's pitch-perfect rendering of Northern Ireland in the 1990s — Friends on the telly, Pulp Fiction on VHS, school canceled because of car bombs — became the single most-watched program in the country's history, and a hit over the water on Channel 4 in England, before Netflix picked it up and took it global.

STRANGEST NOTE FROM A CHANNEL OR NETWORK EXEC

I've been told I need to show a softer side of female characters, which is infuriating.

I was once told a scene between three female characters in their 20s on a night out was unrealistic because they didn't discuss boyfriends or the men in their lives. A male director once rewrote something of mine to include an unnecessary sex scene and female nudity. Thank God things have changed!

ONE INDUSTRY TREND I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE GO AWAY

Rape being used as a plot device. A script that explores the trauma of rape is, of course, completely different. I'm talking about rape being used to move story forward or to shock ... Seriously, we can do better.

JED MERCURIO

Bodyguard U.K.

Already a ratings magnet in the U.K. thanks to his long-running BBC procedural series Line of Duty (now prepping its sixth season), Mercurio enjoyed an explosive international break with Bodyguard. The Richard Madden-led police thriller about an Army vet who becomes embroiled in a major terror threat proved to be a smash hit both at home and

Manolo Caro's The House of Flowers is the most popular Mexican series on Netflix.



abroad, giving the BBC its highest viewing figures — peaking at 11 million — since 2008, adding to Netflix’s Golden Globe haul with a best actor trophy.

THE RECENT SHOW I COULDN’T STOP WATCHING

Drama: *Chernobyl*. **Comedy:** *Fleabag*.

MOST LOST-IN-TRANSLATION MOMENT WITH A U.S. CHANNEL OR EXECUTIVE

It got a little crazy when some people inferred an incestuous relationship between David and Julia in *Bodyguard* because in Richard Madden’s Scottish accent they misheard “ma’am” as “mom.”

PETER MORGAN

The Crown U.K.

The 56-year-old royal whisperer managed one of the season’s trickiest transitions when he replaced Claire Foy’s 1950s-era Queen Elizabeth II with a 1960s update played by freshly minted Oscar winner Olivia Colman. Morgan plans to repeat the cast replacement trick every two seasons, giving him at least a decade before he has to address the scandal currently plaguing the Queen’s youngest son, Prince Andrew.

LAURIE NUNN

Sex Education U.K.

Just a few years after graduating from the U.K.’s National Film and TV School, Nunn had the sort of debut most can only imagine, when her script for a teen comedy-drama landed on a desk at Netflix. *Sex Education* has since become one of the streamer’s most popular shows (Netflix revealed it topped 40 million views in its first month alone). The second season is now in post.

ONE INDUSTRY TREND I CAN’T WAIT TO SEE GO AWAY

I’d love to see “female stories” just be “stories.”

HAS PEAK TV PEAKED?

No, I think audiences are looking to see themselves reflected in the stories they watch, and having more content means there’s more opportunity for specificity and fresh perspectives.

ÁLEX PINA

Money Heist SPAIN

The third season of Pina’s twisty crime drama *Money Heist* smashed global records when it bowed on Netflix this summer — with 44 million households watching in the first four weeks, the best-ever result for a non-English-language series on the service. It justified Netflix’s faith in the Spanish writer-producer, who inked an overall development deal with the streaming giant last year.

THE WRITER-PRODUCER I’D TRADE PLACES WITH FOR A DAY

Vince Gilligan

HOW I KNOW I’M NOT WORKING IN AMERICA

We are fundamentally Latino. Our epicenter is always emotionally exaggerated.

ADAM PRICE

Borgen, Ride Upon the Storm DENMARK

Genre conventions mean little to Danish writer Price, who rewrote the rules for political drama with *Borgen*, which became the most exported Danish series of all time, airing in some 40 countries worldwide. Price’s follow-up, *Upon the Storm*, a story of doubt and betrayal among a family of priests, was a critical success — it won an International Emmy for star Lars Mikkelsen in 2018 — but did not grab a large audience outside Europe and failed to sell to the U.S. But in 2020 global viewers will be able to catch his latest, *Ragnarok*, an apocalyptic climate change drama based on the Scandinavian legend.

HOW “THE GOLDEN ERA OF TV” HAS IMPACTED BUDGETS

When I was a commissioning editor for Danish TV2 in the early 2000s, it would have been almost unthinkable that a Danish show would be airing in 70 to 80 countries on all the continents of the world. All of a sudden it’s possible for us to finance big, international projects with broadcasters or partners from all over the world.

STRANGEST NOTE FROM A CHANNEL OR NETWORK EXEC

At some point, during the early stages of production of my new show [*Ragnarok*] for Netflix, we were discussing hair a lot ... we were discussing the main character’s hair more than the story. We thought of every imaginable hairstyle and even had some rather costly wigs produced before we finally settled at the strangely natural decision of using “the actor’s own hair.”

SALLY WAINWRIGHT

Happy Valley, Gentleman Jack U.K.

Having created gritty U.K. dramas such as *Happy Valley* and *Last Tango in Halifax*, Wainwright rolled things back a few hundred years for HBO/BBC’s *Gentleman Jack*, an LGBT period romance based on the remarkable life of 19th century scholar, writer, traveler and landowner Anne Lister, regarded as the first modern lesbian. The show has already been renewed for a second season.

THE WRITER-PRODUCER I’D TRADE PLACES WITH FOR A DAY

I imagine Peter Morgan has a lot of fun on *The Crown*.

THE RECENT SHOW I COULDN’T STOP WATCHING.

Chernobyl. You get beyond jealous. It just makes you want to raise your game.

WHAT HOLLYWOOD COULD LEARN FROM MY WAY OF MAKING TV

I think the U.K. is way ahead of the U.S. in the way it represents women in TV drama as real, characterful human beings, not idealized male constructs.

PHOEBE WALLER-BRIDGE

Fleabag, Killing Eve U.K.

Waller-Bridge is coming off an *annus mirabilis*, winning six Emmys for *Fleabag* and landing a \$60 million deal with Amazon, which at this point would probably green-light her shopping list. Add in BBC America’s *Killing Eve*, HBO comedy *Run* (with BFF Vicky Jones) and her script polish on the new Bond, and it’s clear Waller-Bridge is the new series queen, on both sides of the Atlantic.

Ariston Anderson, Jennifer Green, John Hecht and Alex Ritman contributed to this report.



Mercurio



Nunn



Pina



Price



Wainwright

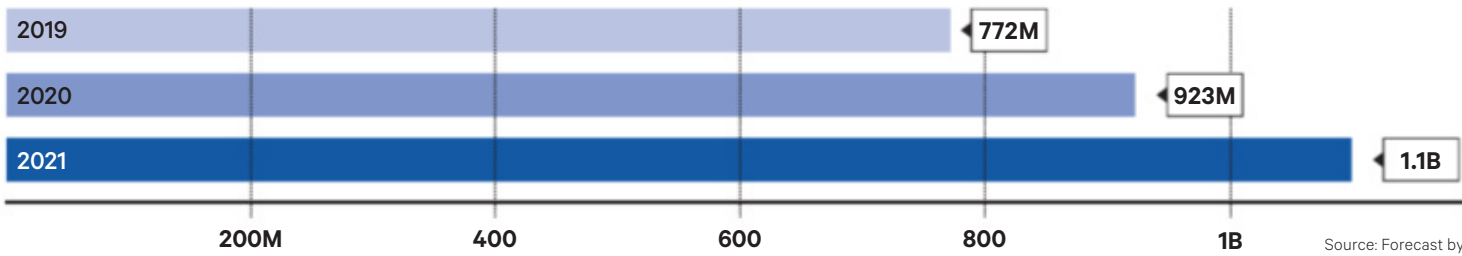


Waller-Bridge

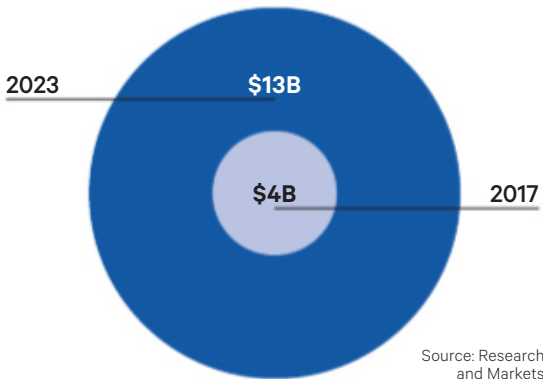
A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY FOR SHOWRUNNERS

As subscriber numbers rise, so do budgets and revenue, meaning there’s never been a better time to be in the business of creating original programming for a global audience

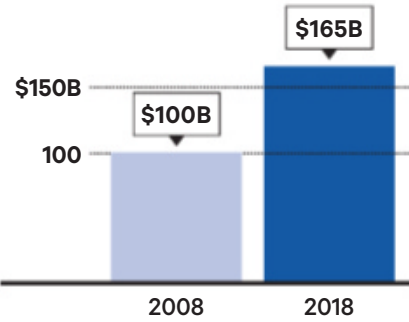
NUMBER OF STREAMING SUBSCRIBERS WORLDWIDE



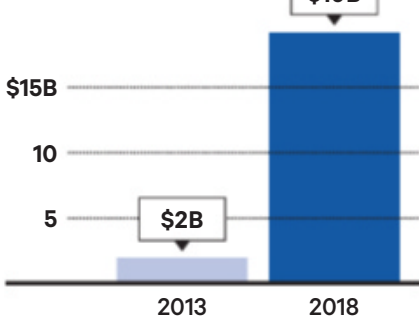
SVOD REVENUE IN WESTERN EUROPE



OVERALL GLOBAL TV CONTENT SPEND



STREAMERS GLOBAL CONTENT SPEND



ACTOR & ACTRESS

‘HER PRESENCE FELT VERY ALIVE’

To nail their portrayals of real people, these top talents interviewed priests, went undercover as a stripper and trained in acrobatics to immerse themselves



RENÉE ZELLWEGER JUDY GARLAND

JUDY • ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

Zellweger portrays the iconic singer in the late 1960s, when she moves to London as her career and personal life are in decline. The actress did a deep dive into much of the photo and video content available. “We were always digging and looking for things. The materials of her legacy were surrounding us

— there was her music and her voice, the audio recordings,” says Zellweger. “We were looking at videos all the time, and reading the books.” Zellweger says that even while they were shooting, new inspirational material would surface. “Someone would find a recording or we’d read something in a book, and we were always sharing and adjusting according to what came along,” she says. “Her presence felt very much alive around us.” — REBECCA FORD

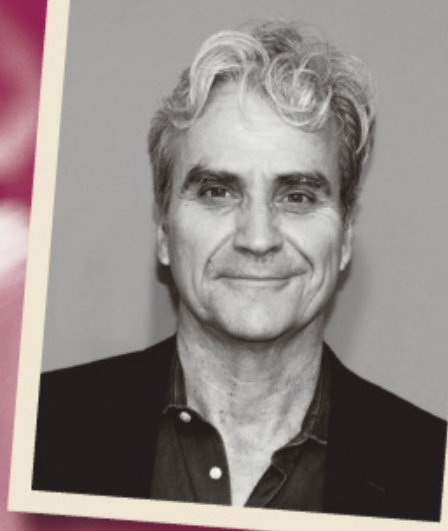


JONATHAN PRYCE POPE FRANCIS

THE TWO POPES • NETFLIX

Pryce had a bit of a head start when it came to playing Pope Francis. “On the very day [he became pope], the internet was full of images of the two of us together, saying how much we looked alike,” says Pryce. “One of my sons called to ask me, ‘Daddy, are you the pope?’” With the look locked down, Pryce watched videos of Pope Francis and talked to priests who worked with him when he was an archbishop and cardinal in Buenos Aires. When he stepped in front of the camera, Pryce says he relied on others to tell him if he was properly embodying the character. “Fernando [Meirelles, the director] said to me, ‘It’s just extraordinary. You’re actually inhabiting this man. You’re walking exactly like him,’” Pryce remembers. “I didn’t have the heart to tell him that Francis walks like I walk. I’ve got a dodgy knee, and I think he has a dodgy knee, too.” — KATIE CAMPIONE





MATTHEW RHYS TOM JUNOD

A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD • SONY

Rhys, who plays journalist Lloyd Vogel, inspired by Tom Junod, author of the *Esquire* profile about his friendship with Mr. Rogers, started his research with an interview. “I was lucky enough to sit down with Tom and talk through his time with Fred Rogers and how he changed his life,” Rhys says. He found it challenging to nail Junod’s walk (“I’m my own worst enemy in trying to capture tiny traits and drop them in gently”), but Rhys says his co-star Tom Hanks, who plays TV icon Rogers, told him that “as long as you get the spirit and the heart of it, the rest will follow.” Rhys worried that Junod’s interviewing technique, in which he’d wait in silence for a subject to open up, “was no good because on film, the pauses are always cut out.” But it was exactly what director Marielle Heller wanted. “She’d tell us, ‘This moment is about two men who are trying to out-wait and out-question each other.’ And we really did try to out-pause each other at times.” Rhys watched the film with Junod sitting next to him. “He said, ‘I’m only so happy that Fred’s good word is being carried on.’ It was a relief that it wasn’t like, ‘You messed up my walk.’” — TARA BITRAN

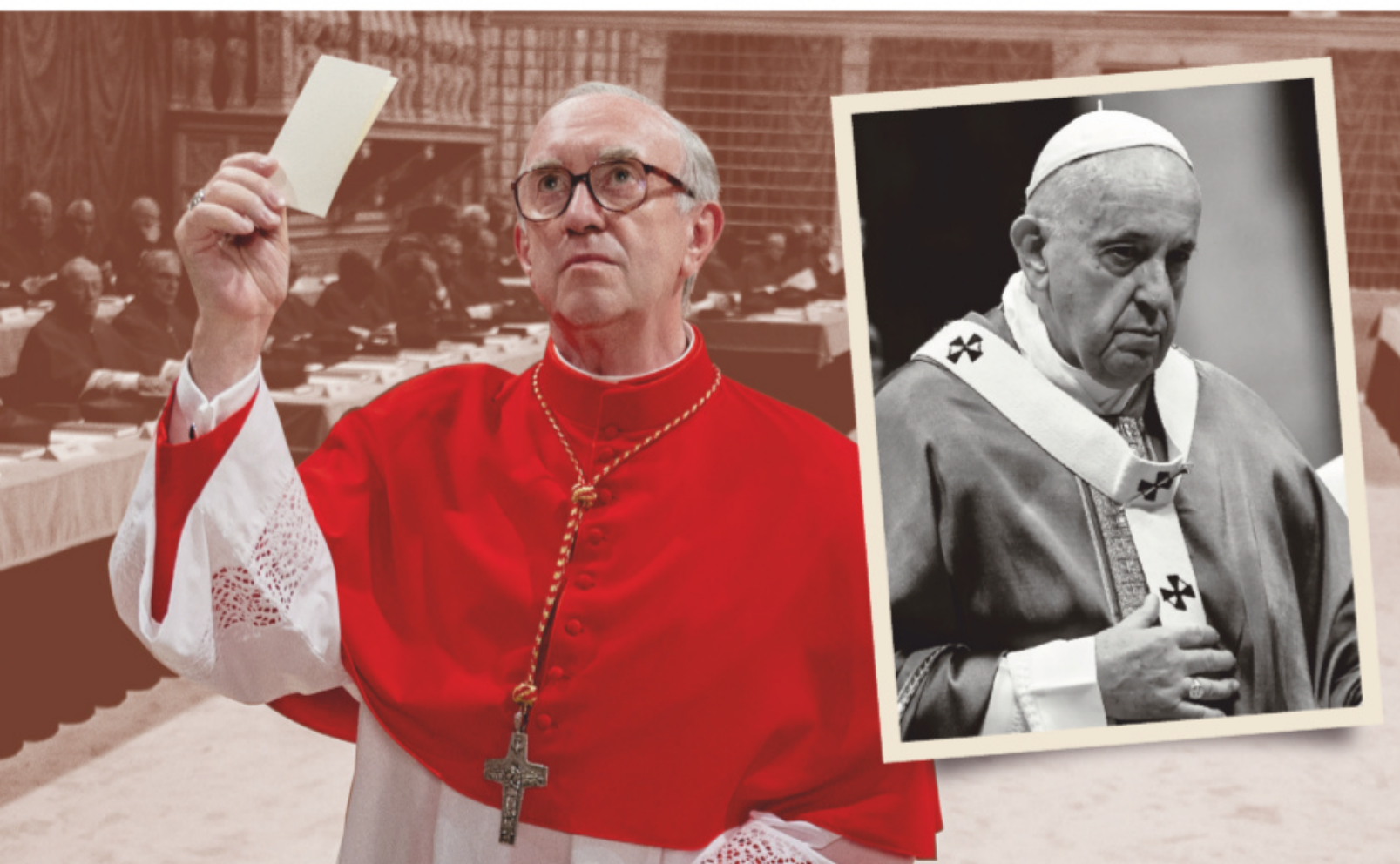


CYNTHIA ERIVO HARRIET TUBMAN

HARRIET • FOCUS



“The work she had done was really important, but we also wanted to make sure that her life, the love she had for her family, for her husband, which she’d never really even spoken about, were part of the story,” says Erivo about portraying famed Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman. To create the whole picture, Erivo looked at photos of the legendary activist to “learn the map of [Tubman’s] face because I wanted to sort of be able to disappear.” And the Grammy winner drew on her own history as a singer to find an authentic voice. “I knew that because of the way she worked and how much she had to go through, she needed something that was far more grounded and would give her power and gravitas,” she says. “It ended up feeling like an alto voice in my diaphragm and in my solar plexus, as opposed to up in my throat and my head, just because it felt like it weighed more.” — HILARY LEWIS



FELICITY JONES SOPHIE BLANCHARD

THE AERONAUTS • AMAZON

Jones plays a balloonist, aka an aeronaut, named Amelia Wren in the adventure drama. While it’s a fictional name, she’s inspired by Sophie Blanchard, the first woman to work as a professional balloonist. “She was a real pioneer, and a bit of a wildcat,” says Jones of Blanchard. She used *The Little Balloonist*, a

novel by Linda Donn that was based on Blanchard’s life, as a resource. Plus, Jones took inspiration from Amelia Earhart: “I looked at a lot of old images of female pilots,” she says. “The costume was very much inspired by those early aviators in terms of the leathers that you see Amelia wearing — and also a real nonchalance and a physical confidence.” For the physical confidence, she took acrobatic training. “She is naturally a free spirit and she has a confidence, a physical strength.” — R.F.





CONSTANCE WU ROSELYN KEO

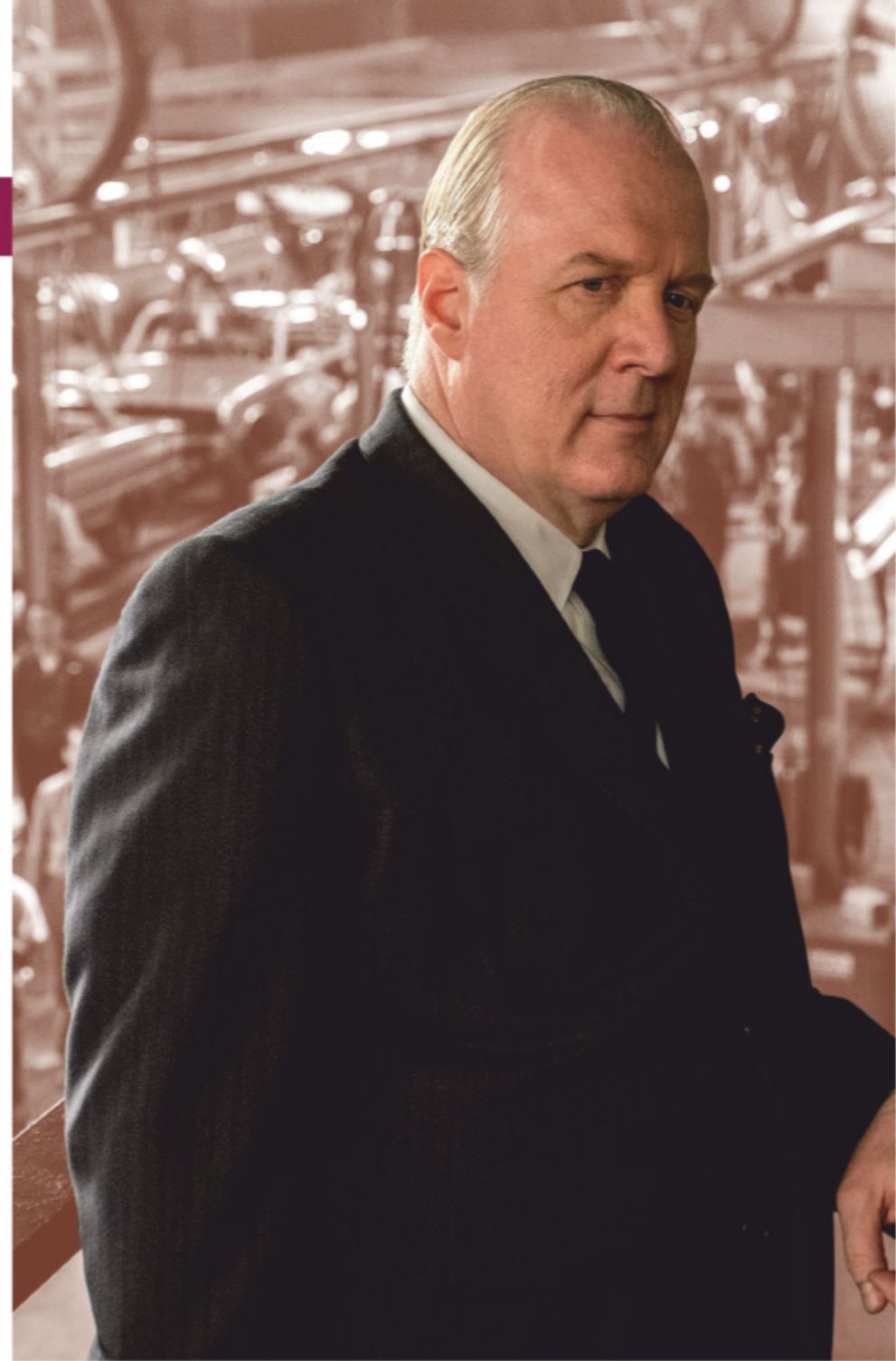
HUSTLERS • STX

To play stripper Destiny in *Hustlers*, Wu dressed in disguise (donning fake tattoos and hair) and went to a strip club to interview for a job. She then worked at a real club as part of her research. “While it was terrifying at first, after a while you get to the point where you’re sort of like bored,” she says. “Really feeling and earning that specific boredom was key.” Wu wasn’t able to meet with Roselyn Keo, the real-life stripper who teamed up with her colleagues to take money from wealthy clients, but before shooting she focused on learning about Keo’s “masked fragility and its roots in her history — the way she pretends in order to hide her need. She went from lonely to belonging to happy to despondent to powerful to jealous to scared to remorseful.” — R.F.

TRACY LETTS HENRY FORD II

FORD V FERRARI • FOX

For his role as Henry Ford II, Letts “read a couple of books,” watched the “Le Mans ’66 documentary” and consulted YouTube but didn’t meet with the Ford family, who, he says, were “keeping their distance.” “[Director] James Mangold was very up-front about saying there’s no reason for us to do an impersonation. He’s not really present in people’s minds,” Letts says. “What seemed to me most essential was to capture the man’s power and the insecurity underneath.” In order to embody Ford’s strong persona, Letts relied on a suit and shoes and “tight” haircut that “helps to show a blocky physical presence, that he’s an obstacle.” Ford’s office was the finishing touch. “It’s grand, but it’s not ostentatious. It’s replete,” Letts says. “You walk onto a set like that, and you’re wearing the suit and you’ve got the haircut, I don’t have to do anything. The power is all right here in my hands.” — H.L.



DA’VINE JOY RANDOLPH LADY REED

DOLEMITE IS MY NAME • NETFLIX

When she was cast as Lady Reed, Randolph had precious little material to draw upon to portray the actress, who became a black pop culture icon during the 1970s. “Unfortunately if you google her, there’s really nothing,” says Randolph, who relied on Lady Reed’s comedy albums, film performances and the recollections of the Netflix movie’s star, Eddie Murphy, who had seen Lady Reed perform in his youth. “The biggest thing was advice that I got from my father, that Lady Reed was like Foxy Brown or Pam Grier, that she was a sexual icon,” Randolph says. “She was not a frumpy woman.” — REBECCA KEEGAN



ROB MORGAN HERBERT RICHARDSON

JUST MERCY • WARNER BROS.

Morgan never got to meet the late Herbert Richardson, the veteran on death row whom he plays in *Just Mercy*. “But I did have two pictures of Herbert, so I would really stare into his eyes and try to download his spirit,” he says. To capture Herbert’s stutter, Morgan consulted his first acting teacher, Keith Johnson, the day



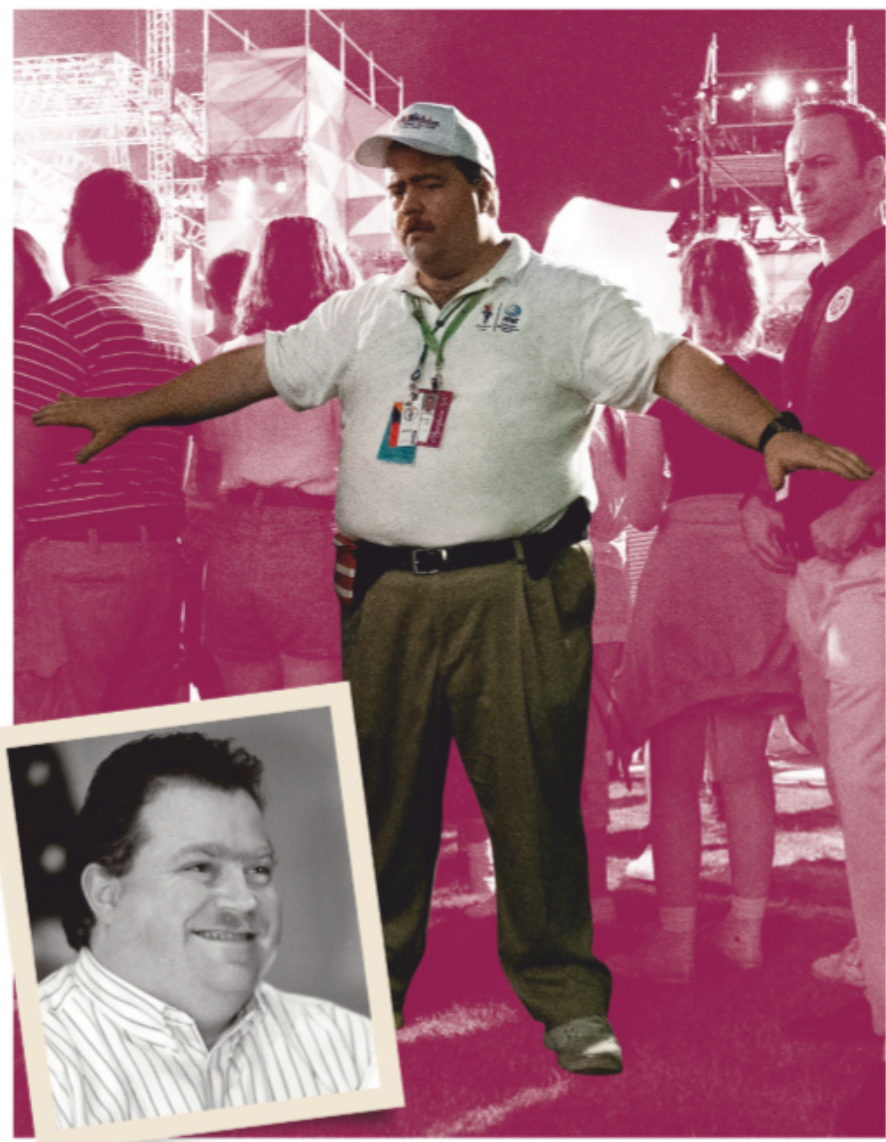
THIS SPREAD: WU; COURTESY OF STYXLIMS. KEO: JOHN PARRA; GETTY IMAGES. RICHARDSON: MORGAN. COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. PICTURES. LETT'S: MERRICK REED/TWENTY-FIFTH CENTURY FOX. FORD: KEYSTONE-FRANCE/GAMMA-RAPHO VIA GETTY IMAGES. ROSTON: COURTESY OF TRAFFIC ENTERTAINMENT GROUP. DOLGUP: FRANÇOIS DUHAMEL/NETLIX. ZHAO: COURTESY OF A24. FAILS: PETER PRATO/A24. JEWELL: DOUG COLLIER/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES. HAUSER: CLAIRE FOLGER/WARNER BROS. PICTURES.

THE FAREWELL • A24



THE LAST BLACK MAN IN SAN FRANCISCO
A24

A man with a beard and a black beanie is painting a white architectural detail, possibly a balustrade, with a brush. He is wearing a red plaid shirt. The background shows a white building with horizontal siding.



RICHARD JEWELL • WARNER BROS.

— R.F.



MAKING OF

THE IRISHMAN

Martin Scorsese brings together (and de-ages) three septuagenarian legends — Robert De Niro, Al Pacino and Joe Pesci — for the biggest ‘experiment’ of his storied career **By Rebecca Keegan**

In 2013, in a banquet room over the Tribeca Grill in New York, Martin Scorsese, Robert De Niro, Al Pacino, Joe Pesci and a handful of other actors gathered for an intimate reading of the *Irishman* script in front of potential backers. At the time, De Niro and Scorsese had been trying to get the movie made for four years, and it would be another six before the mobster film finally made it to theaters.

“We wanted to generate interest, possible financiers and to keep the energy alive,” says Scorsese, 77. “We felt it was a very special culmination of a lot of the work we’d done over the years. And I felt very specific about how I could put in the proper place the milieu of the gangster. And beyond that, the background of the politics

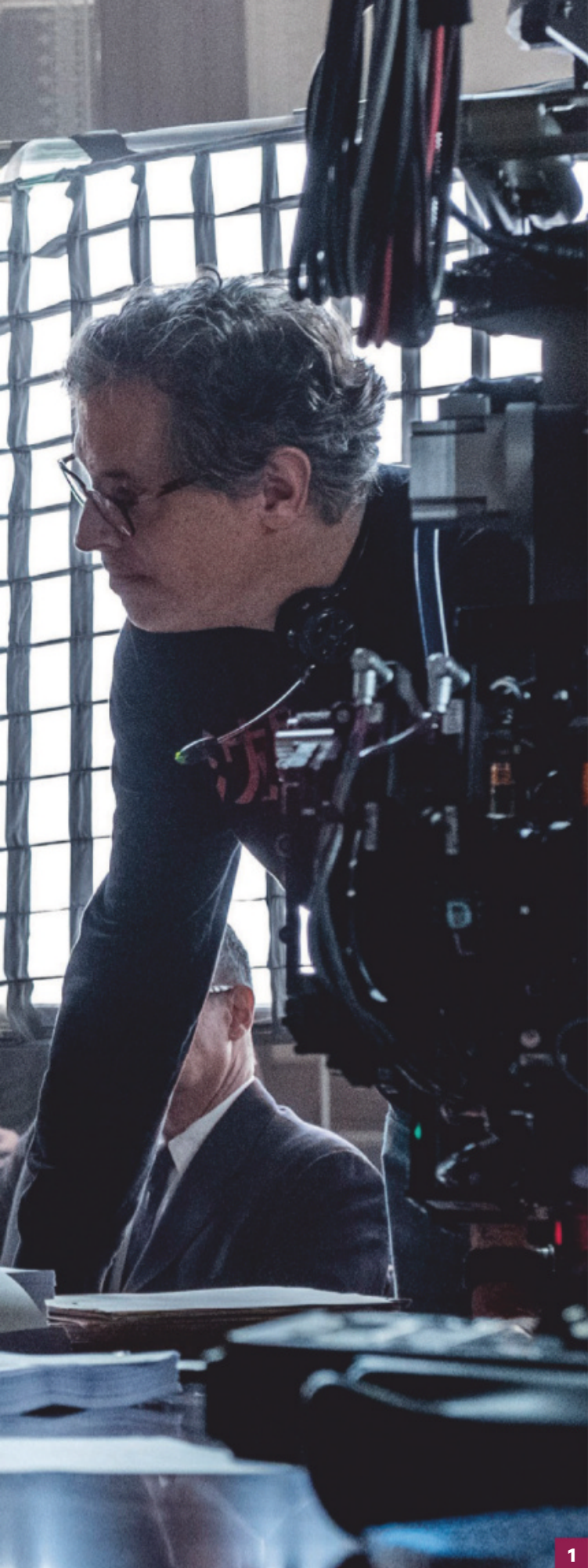
and the state of the nation.”

The Irishman would not seem to be the type of project that needed a pep rally for investors. Based on the 2004 Charles Brandt book *I Heard You Paint Houses*, the movie tells the story of Frank Sheeran (De Niro), a Mafia hit man who professed to having played a role in the death of Jimmy Hoffa (Pacino). The project was to reunite Scorsese, the most celebrated chronicler of the mobster genre, with some of his most beloved collaborators in an epic tale spanning decades, from 1949 to 2000. It would be Scorsese and De Niro’s first teaming since 1995’s *Casino* and, remarkably, the director’s first time working with Pacino. But the film industry’s turn toward franchise fare had begun, and though it was

easy to get a meeting — who in Hollywood wouldn’t want to sit with legends? — it was difficult to secure a green light at the budget (\$175 million) Scorsese felt necessary to do the job.

Six years later, *The Irishman* is playing in theaters and set to premiere Nov. 27 on Netflix. In many ways, the movie that Scorsese and De Niro made, about an older man’s reflections and regrets, is among the most experimental of their careers, both for the digital de-aging process Scorsese relied upon with his principal cast and for its distribution by a streaming company. *The Irishman* also features an uncharacteristically quiet performance by Pesci as crime boss Russell Bufalino, in the actor’s first major film role in nearly a decade.

The project started as a much more traditional genre piece. De Niro began reading Brandt’s book as research for a role in a movie he and Scorsese planned to make for Paramount, *Frankie Machine*, about a retired hit man who is pulled back into the fold. In July 2007, Scorsese and De Niro got on the phone with then-Paramount chairman Brad Grey to greenlight *Frankie Machine* and ended up talking themselves out of a deal. “Brad said, ‘All right, so we’re going to make this movie,’” says De Niro’s producing partner Jane Rosenthal, who also was on the call. “And then you hear Bob say, ‘Well, there’s this other book ...’ Brad said, ‘OK, so you’re going to take this greenlight movie and turn it into a development deal? I’m in.’”



Switching projects was a risky move. But De Niro connected with a wistfulness in the Brandt book, in which Sheeran is telling his story as an 82-year-old looking back on his life. “The whole story reflects how we are getting older, and that feels right,” says De Niro. “We’re getting closer to that time, if you will.”

Steve Zaillian, who co-wrote 2002’s *Gangs of New York* for Scorsese, finished a first draft in 2009, and early on it was clear this was going to be a different type of mob movie for the director. In *Goodfellas*, Zaillian says, “When someone would get killed, there would be a big rock and roll cue for it, and a long shot of showing the dead bodies in the car, the dead body staring up at the ceiling with music. There’s none of that in *The Irishman*.” Instead, the film takes a workmanlike approach to Sheeran’s violent profession, a tone that Scorsese and Zaillian discussed in the writing stage and that cinematographer Rodrigo Prieto achieved with the camera. “The approach to the violence was very matter-of-fact,” Zaillian says. “It would be, he comes up to the guy, shoots him twice in the head, walks away. It was not elaborately written or shot. We were more interested in everything around that. How do you pick the gun? Where do you throw the gun?”

Over the years, as financing came and went and De Niro’s and Scorsese’s schedules diverged and converged, Zaillian would return to the script, sometimes meeting with Brandt to flesh out ideas in the book. An early draft included a much larger section on Sheeran’s service in World War II, which ultimately was excised (even with that trim, the movie clocks at a leisurely three-hour, 30-minute running time).

After years of failed starts and at the urging of Scorsese’s manager, Rick Yorn, Scorsese and De Niro sent the script to Netflix chief content officer Ted Sarandos in November 2016. Netflix was trying to establish itself as a home for marquee

1 “I wanted to make the film with Bob and with Al and with Joe, and I didn’t want to have younger versions thereof. Where do you find them, first of all?” says Scorsese (center, with Pacino, left, as Jimmy Hoffa, and cinematographer Rodrigo Prieto).

2 Costume designer Sandy Powell (left), adjusting the wardrobe of a background actress, dressed more than 200 characters and more than 6,000 background actors across a range of periods from 1949 to 2000.

3 In a departure from his other, more flamboyant mob movies such as *Goodfellas* and *Casino*, Scorsese asked Prieto to shoot in a straightforward style meant to evoke the workmanlike attitude of De Niro’s Frank Sheeran. “Instead of doing a lot coverage with spectacular, weird angles or camera moves, we kept it simple,” Prieto says.

filmmakers and was willing to pay to get them. Ten months later, *The Irishman* began production in New York, on a sprawling, 108-day shoot that would visit more than 160 locations and 28 built sets, include 200 characters and hop through four time periods.

Among the early challenges was luring Pesci to the project. The actor at first assumed Scorsese wanted him to play yet another flamboyant, quick-tempered gangster, a prospect that didn't pose enough interest to pull him back from a comfortable life of playing golf and singing jazz under his pseudonym, Joe Doggs. "There was a lot of persuasion," Scorsese says. "If we're going to come together again, it's got to be something that could be a change for him. And he wasn't sure that was the case. Once he caught on that it was going to be the opposite of what you normally see, he really enjoyed himself."

Production designer Bob Shaw set about creating spaces that would serve Scorsese's vision of simplicity in the lives of the criminal characters. Shaw's team built a modest, lived-in restaurant where the mobsters would meet, adding grease and dust-filled vents. "These are not people leading glamorous lives," says Shaw. "They spend their lives looking over their shoulders. They're very, very morally compromised, and their reward is to lead a fairly ordinary life. It does make you wonder why anyone would do it. 'I imperiled my mortal soul for a house in South Philadelphia.'"

Scorsese's early directions to Prieto also were about style. "He said, 'You know, I was imagining the film to have this sort of a



1



2

1 De Niro and Scorsese have made eight features together. "There's an incredible, unspoken trust between the two of them in the area of performance," says Scorsese's producer, Emma Tillinger Koskoff.
2 Production designer Bob Shaw built the Villa Roma, where the characters gather. "Marty kept saying we had to shoot it in a real restaurant because you could smell the sauce in the floorboards," Shaw says. "It was a challenge to convince him we could get the feeling with a set."
3 Some periods of the movie required De Niro's digital "youthification" by ILM. His costumes, like this plaid jacket, also established the era.

feeling of the memory of family films," Prieto says. "But I don't want it to be all handheld and grainy, just that feeling." In order to achieve a reminiscent mood, Prieto studied still photography from the different eras and replicated the color of film emulsions used at the time.

Prieto's most daunting task, however, was shooting the scenes where De Niro, 76, Pacino, 79, and Pesci, 76, played themselves as men in midlife, using a camera rig nicknamed "the three-headed monster" that would allow visual effects artists at Industrial Light & Magic to de-age the actors digitally without the performers wearing helmets or digital markers on their faces. Scorsese had decided against casting young actors for those sequences and instead enlisted visual effects supervisor Pablo Helman to "youthify" his septuagenarian

leads. "Where do you find them, first of all?" Scorsese says of casting young corollaries to his leads. "The thing about Bob and Joe and Al is that, playing younger, they're not playing themselves younger, they're playing their characters younger. And what they bring to all that is that they experienced the context of the history and the stories as it was happening, from the '50s, '60s, '70s. That's there in their body language and in their faces. Younger people, it's just really hard. They could maybe do it, but I wouldn't know how to tell them what the significance of Jimmy Hoffa was or the shooting of Joey Gallo. I couldn't really explain. I mean, I could, but they don't get it."

On set, Scorsese and De Niro fell into a comfortable rhythm built upon a friendship that began when they were teenagers and a working partnership that includes eight features, starting with *Mean Streets* in 1973 and including *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull*. "It's the shared history," says Emma Tillinger Koskoff, Scorsese's producer. "When Bob feels good about something, Marty feels good about it, and vice versa. There's an incredible, really unspoken trust between the two of them in the area of performance."

Once in the editing room with his longtime editor, Thelma Schoonmaker, "it was really a matter of fashioning a pace," Scorsese says. "Taking a chance on making things run just a hair longer or dwelling on an image just a few frames more." When Scorsese and Schoonmaker began working with early shots of the CGI, "we were concerned — 'Are the people going to go with this?'" Scorsese says. "After a while, we got so used to seeing the younger faces, we didn't give it a second thought, except to get the youthifying as perfect as we could."

Netflix has given the film a three-and-a-half-week exclusive theatrical release, long by the streamer's standards but not enough to entice large theater chains to carry *The Irishman*. For the first time in his career, Scorsese's box office results are not being publicly shared, a mixed blessing for a filmmaker who has known his share of both hits and misses commercially. "I've been told that the theaters are well attended," Scorsese says. "Honestly, it's an experiment, as far as I'm concerned. You could see it streamed. You could go see it on a bigger screen. It might be a different experience with an audience. Bottom line is, I just — I'm so happy I got the film made." **THR**



3



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Film



Paul Walter Hauser (right) plays the titular security guard turned hero turned media target; Kathy Bates is his mother, Bobi; and Sam Rockwell his lawyer, Watson Bryant.

Jewell is lauded for his quick action, which prevented more from being hurt.

This accidental hero soon sees his applause going quiet. A former boss calls the FBI with his suspicions about Jewell, and a profile quickly takes shape of a misfit who triggered a tragedy with the purpose of then receiving public acclaim as a savior. FBI honcho Tom Shaw (Jon Hamm) is convinced they've got their man in their sights — and the film shows him receiving sexual favors from the real-life (but now deceased) *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* reporter Kathy Scruggs (Olivia Wilde) in exchange for the tip. (According to the current editor-in-chief of the newspaper, there is no evidence this happened.)

Jewell's life becomes hell, with the media on his case day and night and the FBI invading the family apartment. What he needs is a lawyer — and while Watson Bryant (Sam Rockwell) may not be another Johnnie Cochran or Gloria Allred, he sees that the poor guy is being railroaded and commits to clearing his name.

Jewell endures the onslaught for three months, until the FBI realizes he couldn't have pulled off what they believed he did. The reality lay elsewhere, but that's another story. What interests Eastwood, as in earlier films, is the gap between American ideals and the more troubling reality.

The movie loses steam in the final stretch, but the principal actors are ideally cast — particularly Hauser, who carries the film in a most rare and unlikely role.

OPENS

Friday, Dec. 13 (Warner Bros.)

CAST

Paul Walter Hauser, Sam Rockwell, Kathy Bates, Jon Hamm, Olivia Wilde, Nina Arianda, Ian Gomez

DIRECTOR

Clint Eastwood // Rated R, 131 minutes

Richard Jewell

Clint Eastwood takes aim at the media in this sturdily told, strongly acted true-life tale of an unlikely American hero forced to endure harrowing public scrutiny

By Todd McCarthy

Clint Eastwood is partial to accidental real-life heroes in recent years, and he's found a good, if unprepossessing one, in *Richard Jewell*, a lively, none-too-flattering look at the "media lynching" of a security guard the press decided was responsible for a bombing at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games.

It's similar to his 2016 *Sully*, which also centered on a guy who became a hero by doing his job but whose actions were picked apart. The new film's concern with the vindication of an innocent man provides a comparably satisfying dramatic trajectory.

Most films about journalism since *All the President's Men* 43

years ago have taken the media's side, portraying it as a scruffy, if noble, institution that's essential to the well-being of democracy. Eastwood and screenwriter Billy Ray (*Captain Phillips*) here take a different view, portraying it as reckless, corrupt and immoral. At the center is the hapless Jewell, an overweight oddball who may well be the least likely leading man in any of Eastwood's films — but Paul Walter Hauser (*I, Tonya*) makes the most of it.

The film benefits from the title role being played by a relative unknown. The casting enhances the everyman nature of this ordinary fellow, who has misfortune,

and then a certain measure of greatness, thrust upon him.

The nicely balanced script at the outset sketches an impression of Jewell as a mama's boy outcast to arouse slight suspicions that he could have some mental health issues. A devoted student of the law — "I study the penal code every night," he boasts — Jewell also is a video arcade regular who occasionally gets himself in trouble or loses security jobs out of overzealousness. A once-upon-a-time cop, he boasts of a huge gun collection and spends a lot of time at the shooting range. He still lives with his loving mom, Bobi (a wonderful Kathy Bates).

On the evening of July 27, a crowd is enjoying a performance in Centennial Olympic Park when a call comes in about an imminent bombing. Jewell jumps into action, beginning to clear the area when he notices a stray backpack. A pipe bomb goes off, killing one and injuring 111, but



Lauren Ambrose is a woman haunted by grief after the death of her infant son.

Servant

Apple TV+'s M. Night Shyamalan-produced series is effectively creepy, but ends up more frustrating than fascinating **By Daniel Fienberg**

Apple TV+'s *Servant* knows what makes you squirm. Over 10 episodes, the M. Night Shyamalan-produced series gets under your skin, poking at phobias tied to childbirth and parenting. What the show doesn't do as well is find that next level, narratively or psychologically, that would allow it to become something more than efficient and stylish.

Though Shyamalan directed two episodes, *Servant* was created and written by Tony Basgallop (*Hotel Babylon*). It's the story of the Turners, an affluent Philadelphia couple. Dorothy (Lauren Ambrose) is a beloved TV reporter. Sean (Toby Kebbell) is a revered food consultant. Their house is an astonishing-if-creaky brownstone. Their marriage is also showing cracks after the death of their infant son, and Dorothy in particular is barely holding on with the assistance of a "reborn doll," a hauntingly accurate effigy that she's treating like her departed Jericho. That's distressing enough, before the arrival of eerily sheltered 18-year-old Leanne (Nell Tiger Free), the nanny they hired to take care of the baby. Then things start getting truly odd.

Ambrose is suitably intense, while Kebbell does something quieter and Free (*Game of Thrones*) makes Leanne sad, halting and totally unreadable in all the ways the story demands. Adding welcome humor as the fourth member of the core quartet is Rupert Grint as Dorothy's brother.

Servant is a tight little exercise in calibrated unease. Almost the entire series takes place within the Turner house, expertly mounted by production designer Naaman Marshall. Directors build claustrophobia within the confines of the residence, full of doorframes posed like Gothic arches, lamps positioned to cast moody shadows and a wine cellar that deserves equal billing with the stars. Cinematographer Mike Gioulakis balances the spooky with glossy depictions of Sean's cooking, making this the rare show that's nauseating and appetizing in equal measure.

But for all its aesthetic deftness, *Servant* is a *Twilight Zone* episode stretched over 10 half-hour installments. That ample time hasn't been used for a deeper exploration of postpartum depression and trauma or to smooth

out character inconsistencies. The show sets a trail of unresolved teases, then stumbles through a two-episode conclusion that leaves so many elements dangling that you'll either angrily demand a second season or angrily check out entirely. Despite all I admire about *Servant*, I was closer to the latter.

AIRDATE Friday, Nov. 28 (Apple TV+)

CAST Lauren Ambrose, Toby Kebbell, Nell Tiger Free, Rupert Grint

CREATOR Tony Basgallop


EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS M. Night Shyamalan, Tony Basgallop

THR'S SOCIAL CLIMBERS

A ranking of the week's top actors, unscripted series and talk shows based on social media engagement across Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and more

This Week | Last Week | Actors

1 ↑ | 4 | **Dwayne Johnson**



"This role is unlike any other I've ever played in my career and I'm grateful to the bone we'll all go on this journey together," Johnson wrote Nov. 14 about the superhero Black Adam he'll portray in a 2021 DC film, vaulting him back to No. 1.

- 2 ↓ | 1 | Millie Bobby Brown
- 3 ↑ | 5 | Jennifer Aniston
- 4 ↑ | 11 | Jennifer Lopez
- 5 ↓ | 3 | Dove Cameron
- 6 ↑ | 14 | Emily Ratajkowski
- 7 ↑ | - | Kevin Hart
- 8 ↓ | 2 | Lili Reinhart
- 9 ↓ | 8 | George Takei
- 10 ↔ | 10 | Noah Schnapp
- 11 ↓ | 6 | Vanessa Hudgens
- 12 ↑ | - | Sofia Carson
- 13 ↑ | - | Ian Somerhalder
- 14 ↑ | - | Mark Ruffalo
- 15 ↑ | - | Chris Hemsworth
- 16 ↑ | - | Cole Sprouse
- 17 ↑ | - | Alexandra Daddario
- 18 ↓ | 7 | Priyanka Chopra Jonas

19 ↑ | - | **Deepika Padukone**




Padukone's Nov. 14 Facebook uploads celebrating her first wedding anniversary with Ranveer Singh (835,000 Facebook post likes, up 2,000 percent) earns the actress her first Top Actors appearance since June and her third overall in 2019.

- 20 ↓ | 13 | Kristen Bell
- 21 ↓ | 18 | Lily Collins
- 22 ↑ | - | Alyssa Milano
- 23 ↓ | 22 | Eugenio Derbez
- 24 ↑ | - | Reese Witherspoon
- 25 ↑ | - | Madelaine Petsch

This Week | Last Week | Unscripted TV

1 ↑ | 2 | **Dancing With the Stars**



ABC's dance competition rises to No. 1 on Top Unscripted for the first time, alongside boosts in Instagram favorites (up 2 percent), Facebook post likes (up 52 percent) and YouTube favorites (up 7 percent). James Van Der Beek was its latest elimination.

- 2 ↓ | 1 | Wild 'N Out
- 3 ↔ | 3 | The Voice
- 4 ↔ | 4 | America's Funniest ... Videos
- 5 ↔ | 5 | The Masked Singer
- 6 ↑ | 8 | Keeping Up ... Kardashians
- 7 ↑ | - | The Bachelor
- 8 ↑ | 10 | Top Gear
- 9 ↑ | - | Live PD
- 10 ↑ | - | The Bachelorette

This Week | Last Week | News/Talk/Variety

1 ↑ | - | **Saturday Night Live**



After a one-week break, SNL returned to air with host and musical guest Harry Styles, garnering the show major marks across all social media platforms, including 1.2 million Instagram favorites and 804,000 Twitter likes.

- 2 ↓ | 1 | The Daily Show
- 3 ↓ | 2 | Today
- 4 ↓ | 3 | Entertainment Tonight
- 5 ↓ | 4 | The Late Show
- 6 ↓ | 5 | The Tonight Show
- 7 ↑ | 10 | Good Morning America
- 8 ↑ | - | Jimmy Kimmel Live!
- 9 ↓ | 8 | Un Nuevo Día
- 10 ↑ | - | ¡Despierta América!

Data Compiled By



Source: The week's most active and talked-about entertainers on leading social networking sites Facebook, Google Plus, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube for the week ending Nov. 19. Rankings are based on a formula blending weekly additions of fans as well as cumulative weekly reactions and conversations, as tracked by MVP Index.

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Dealmakers of the Year: Full Stream Ahead

Negotiators on the front lines of the content wars reveal secrets behind the biggest M&A and overall deals of 2019

Edited by Ashley Cullins

It wasn't too long ago that Hollywood's industry-shifting megadeals were almost exclusively mergers, acquisitions and joint ventures. But the rise of global streaming services has spawned a new era. Deals like this year's recombination of Viacom and CBS are still a big part of the landscape, but Netflix, HBO Max and their rivals doling out eight- and nine-figure talent overalls and spending hundreds of millions on exclusive rights to library content are becoming the norm. *THR*'s fourth annual dealmakers list spotlights the men and women behind some of the most headlining-grabbing transactions of 2019 — most of whom subscribe to “literally all” the streamers.

James Adams
SCHRECK ROSE

Adams negotiated **John Krasinski's** “groundbreaking” three-year deal to develop projects for Prime Video. “It’s not only his first-look deal with Amazon,” he says, “it’s

tied in with what he’s done on *Jack Ryan* as an actor and executive producer.” Adams also closed Krasinski’s *A Quiet Place 2* pact and inked **Natasha Lyonne's** deal for *Russian Doll*. “I’ve represented her since she was 16 years old,” says

Adams, who has “seen her through everything.”
Book I couldn't put down
“*Barkskins* by **Annie Proulx**.”

Bruce Campbell
DISCOVERY

After Discovery's \$14.6 billion purchase of Scripps last year, Campbell led the company through a 10-year SVOD partnership with BBC, a \$35 million takeover of *Golf Digest* and a joint venture with **Chip and Joanna Gaines** to launch a channel. Says Campbell, “We are really trying to tackle the globe.”
Worst Hollywood jargon
“Ecosystem.”



Adams



Campbell

George Cheeks and Frances Manfredi
NBCUNIVERSAL

Despite a crowded pool of streamers, NBC's Peacock made a splash with the announcement that it would be the exclusive home of sitcom *The Office* for the next five years — thanks to Cheeks and Manfredi, who snagged the series from Netflix in a nine-figure deal. Peacock launches in April with additional hit library titles including **Amy Poehler** starrer *Parks and Recreation* and originals like **Mike Schur's** *Rutherford Falls* led by *Office* alum **Ed Helms**.

Illustration by **Tim Peacock**

Creighton Condon and Daniel Litowitz

SHEARMAN & STERLING

The New York duo advised Viacom in its all-stock merger with CBS Corp., which will close in December, creating ViacomCBS, a behemoth with more than \$28 billion in annual revenue and 4.3 billion TV viewers worldwide. It's a full-circle moment, as their past work includes the split of Viacom and CBS in 2006.

Justin Connolly and Tehmina Jaffer

DISNEY

Disney+ launched Nov. 12 with eight more Marvel movies than originally planned, including *Doctor Strange* and *Thor*. That was thanks to Connolly and his team — which spearheads content distribution for Disney — reclaiming projects previously licensed to other platforms. Jaffer, who joined in March from Netflix, handles deals on Disney+ originals, including those from in-house studios as well as third-party projects like CBS Studios' *Diary of a Female President*.

Streamers I subscribe to Connolly: Disney+, ESPN+ and Hulu. Jaffer: Disney+ and Netflix

Sandra Dewey and Michael Quigley

HBO MAX

Dewey and Quigley are stocking HBO Max with content for its May launch. Dewey spearheads originals dealmaking, helping land projects from creatives like **Greg Berlanti** and **Reese Witherspoon**, while



Cheeks



Manfredi



Condon



Litowitz



Connolly



Jaffer



Dewey



Quigley



Eisman



Johnson



Kohner



Meili

Quigley was behind the streamer's big deals for the *Friends* (\$425 million) and *Big Bang Theory* (multibillion-dollar) libraries. "We pursued them both aggressively, and I'm glad we won out," he says. The longtime Turner execs also nabbed five new seasons of *Sesame Street* for HBO Max, along with the past 50 years of its kids programming.

Work habit I'm trying to break Dewey: "Afternoon snacking." Quigley: "The working vacation."

David Eisman

SKADDEN

Eisman helped UTA expand its sports presence with the purchase of **Rich Paul's** Klutch Sports, which represents **LeBron James**. He also negotiated TPG's purchase of Hollywood payroll services company Entertainment Partners and helped strike a strategic relationship between **Scooter Braun** and **David Maisel's** Mythos Studios and Quixote Studios, a premier rental company for TV and film.

Book I couldn't put down *Billion Dollar Whale*

Matthew Johnson

ZIFFREN BRITTENHAM

"The marketplace has dramatically changed over the past 12 months because of the competition among the streamers for content," says Johnson, who is navigating the "evolving SVOD marketplace" from Costa Rica. Johnson negotiated a joint venture for **Tyler Perry** with Viacom to launch BET+, making the creator an equity partner and a programming supplier. He also set up **Adam McKay's** overall deals (HBO for TV and Paramount for features) and brokered **Alfonso Cuarón's** Apple pact. **Streamers I subscribe to** "Literally all of them."

Alex Kohner

MORRIS YORN

Kohner negotiated *Stranger Things* showrunners **Matt** and **Ross Duffer's** epic nine-figure overall film and TV



deal with Netflix, announced in September. While long-time producers like **Ryan Murphy**, **Shonda Rhimes** and **J.J. Abrams** all have recently landed megadeals amid fierce competition for talent, the Duffers differ in that they're relatively new to the business: "In what has traditionally been a precedent business, to have guys who are starting the fourth season [of *Stranger Things*] make one of the top, top deals ... that's groundbreaking," Kohner says. **Worst Hollywood jargon** "Deep dive. This should only be used by people in submarines."

Barbara Meili

GREENBERG TRAURIG

Meili advised design darlings Chip and Joanna Gaines through negotiations to lend their highly coveted Magnolia moniker to a new Discovery cable network. "There's tremendous time pressure when you're rebranding an existing network, DIY, and need the lead time to produce enough programming to fill it," says Meili of the deal. Ink dry, the Gaineses are now focused on a growing slate and Magnolia's October launch. **Work habit I'm trying to break** "Dependency on email in communicating with clients."

Scott Mills and Nadja Webb Cogsville

BET AND VIACOM

When preparing to launch a streaming service catering to

African American audiences, BET president Mills knew whom to call: "Tyler [Perry] is to BET as Pixar is to Disney." In 2017, Viacom inked a rich overall pact with Perry, paving the way for BET+, a subscription service that will combine the creator's content with BET's library, market titles and originals (**Tracy Oliver's** *First Wives Club*). Deputy general counsel Webb Cogsville, a Viacom veteran, calls the deal "a leviathan," adding, "Within the Viacom family there was no other direct-to-consumer offering." **Book I couldn't put down** Mills: "*I Am Pilgrim* by **Terry Hayes**." Webb Cogsville: "*The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* by **Michael Chabon**."

Bryan Noon and Amy Paquette

NETFLIX

Noon and Paquette are behind Netflix's eye-popping talent deals. Amid a bidding war, Noon fashioned a reported \$200 million overall deal with *Game of Thrones* showrunners **D.B. Weiss** and **David Benioff**, and ensured *Stranger Things* creators Matt and Ross Duffer would stay put. Paquette orchestrated some of Netflix's biggest film deals, including *Red Notice* starring **Dwayne Johnson** and **Gal Gadot**, **Ryan Murphy's** adaptation of *The Prom* and the *Beverly Hills Cop* sequel led by **Eddie Murphy**. "Competition has forced prices higher in some circumstances and also elevated

Prolific creator Tyler Perry is getting into the streaming business with BET+.





the importance of other deal points,” says Paquette, citing creative freedom and resources as priorities.
Work habit I’m trying to break Both: Eating lunch at my desk.

Gretchen Rush

HANSEN JACOBSON

Rush negotiated some jaw-dropping talent deals, like the nine-figure payday *GoT* duo Benioff and Weiss got from Netflix. Set amid the war between the WGA and agents, the streamer beat out six other buyers after five months of negotiations that were “about as intense as you get,” says Rush. She also inked Reese Witherspoon’s \$2 million-per-episode deal for *The Morning Show* (Apple TV+). Meanwhile, the star’s Hello Sunshine shingle is working on series for Amazon and Netflix, a model Rush thinks is the future: “With these shorter orders, some of these outlets and platforms are rethinking exclusivity.”
Go-to comfort food “Fries.”

Faiza Saeed

CRAVATH SWAINE & MOORE

Viacom tapped Saeed to help navigate its merger with CBS. ViacomCBS will be worth some \$25 billion, which is a relatively modest deal for Saeed, considering she represented Disney in its \$71 billion acquisition of 21st Century Fox and Time Warner in its \$109 billion sale to AT&T. She also advised Hasbro in its \$4 billion acquisition of Entertainment

One and Disney — again — in Sinclair Broadcast Group’s \$9.6 billion acquisition of 21 Fox Regional Sports Networks and Fox College Sports.

Dan Scharf

AMAZON STUDIOS

Scharf leads the charge on nearly all of the streamer’s creative agreements — like overall deals for *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* showrunner **Amy Sherman-Palladino**, *Westworld* creators **Jonathan Nolan** and **Lisa Joy**, and *Fleabag* phenom **Phoebe Waller-Bridge**. “The influx of new buyers has continued [and] accelerated massive above-the-line fee escalations,” says Scharf, who also locked down first-look deals with **Nicole Kidman**, **Michael B. Jordan** and **Jordan Peele**.
My 2020 mantra “Take a breath. Listen. Pick your battles.”

Robert Schumer

PAUL WEISS

Schumer advised the special committee of the CBS Corp. board in its merger with Viacom, expected to close in December with a market cap of about \$25 billion. The



HBO Max will reportedly pay \$425 million to keep *Friends* for five years.

New York-based veteran says ViacomCBS will be “a pre-eminent content provider to the world.”

Work habit I’m trying to break “Multitasking (checking my iPhone while on a conference call).”

Sheila Spence

SPOTIFY

Spotify recruited Spence in 2017 ahead of its IPO to build up its corporate development team. Her work culminated with the 2019 acquisitions of Gimlet Media, Anchor and Parcast, an investment of some \$400 million into the podcasting space. She says the Gimlet deal nearly wasn’t inked in time for the Feb. 6 announcement. “It was a nail-biting experience,” she says of the eleventh-hour negotiation. “I knew what we had to get done, and I wasn’t going to make any compromises on the deal terms.”

Book I couldn’t put down “Too busy listening. No time to read.”

Karen Tatevosian

SONY PICTURES TV

As the battle to secure top talent has heated up, Sony executive vp of business affairs Tatevosian has helped her studio land and retain some of its biggest boldfaced names. She helped Sony seal a nine-figure pact with *Spiderman: Into the Spider-Verse* helmers **Phil Lord** and **Chris Miller** and kept 97-year-old super-producer **Norman Lear** in-house with a two-year first-look deal. That’s not to mention the deals on valuable IP she helped seal, like one for the *Breaking Bad* spinoff movie *El Camino* and Lear’s



Mills



Webb Cogsville



Noon



Paquette



Rush



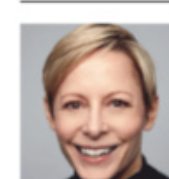
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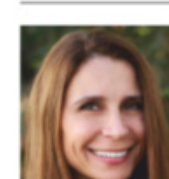
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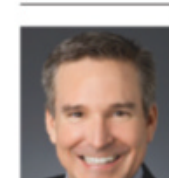
Schumer



Spence



Tatevosian



Thompson



Wolfe

comedy *One Day at a Time*, canceled on Netflix but given a new life on Pop TV.

Streamers I subscribe to “Hulu, Netflix, Prime, HBO Go, Apple.”

Matthew Thompson

SIDLEY AUSTIN

Thompson guided Entertainment One, the Canadian force behind series like *Criminal Minds* and *The Walking Dead*, in its \$4 billion acquisition by toy giant Hasbro and its purchase of unscripted TV producer Blackfin. He also assisted Dwayne Johnson and **Dany Garcia** in launching Athleticon with IMG, while helping *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* team **Rian Johnson** and **Ram Bergman** create T-Street and strike a joint venture with MRC (which, like *THR*, is owned by Valence Media).
My 2020 mantra “Clients and colleagues are critical, but family first.”

Brian Wolfe

DAVIS POLK & WARDWELL

Wolfe advised client Comcast in the unwinding of its Hulu joint venture with Disney. In March, the companies announced a complex deal that saw Disney assume full operational control of the streamer, while Comcast (via NBCU) can sell its stake in 2024 for a minimum of \$5.8 billion. “Neither side had to do the deal,” says Wolfe. “That meant it had to work for everybody.” As a result, the telecom giant can stock NBCU’s new streamer, Peacock, with shows it licensed to Hulu like *30 Rock* and *Saturday Night Live*.
Go-to comfort food “Pizza and wine.”

Profiles written by Trilby Beresford, Paul Bond, Mia Galuppo, Natalie Jarvey, Katie Kilkenny, Michael O’Connell, Bryn Elise Sandberg and Georg Szalai.



1 Basner launched FilmNation in 2008.
2 *The Big Sick* grossed \$56 million worldwide.
3 *Arrival* earned eight Oscar nominations.

A Flourishing FilmNation, Thanks to Flexibility

Glen Basner on expanding his indie banner into TV, theater and podcasts

By Tatiana Siegel

Eleven years after launching FilmNation Entertainment and becoming one of the most successful indie studios in the industry, **Glen Basner** might want to consider dropping the word “film” from the company’s name. After all, the production, financing and foreign sales outfit behind *The King’s Speech*, *Arrival* and *The Big Sick*, which employs 42, is moving aggressively into television (**Derek Cianfrance**’s limited series *I Know This Much Is True*), theater (*The Band’s Visit*, winner of 10 Tonys) and even podcasting (sci-fi series *Hyper-Thetical*, hosted by actress **Kerry Bishé**). Those projects complement a 2020 film slate that includes the **Tom Hanks**-led World War II drama *Greyhound* and the Cold War thriller *Ironbark*, starring **Benedict Cumberbatch**. The 52-year-old Long Island native, who will receive the Industry Tribute at the 29th IFP Gotham Awards on Dec. 2, talked to *THR* about expanding his scope and why “everything moved forward pretty smoothly” on spy film *355* despite a missing star, **Fan Bingbing**.

**Gotham
Awards**

Dec. 2
Cipriani Wall
Street, NYC

What was the mindset behind your efforts to diversify?

In the past, we’d only thought about feature films, and it was limiting. There were stories that we felt excited to tell but were like, “That’s not for us because it’s not a feature film.” We saw talent migrate between all forms, and there was no reason for us to limit ourselves further.

You opened a London office and launched a U.K.-based television production company. Why is British TV so attractive?

There’s an amazing talent pool in the U.K. Legally, British broadcasters cannot own the idea of the content, and so British production companies are able to get commissions in the U.K. and end up owning the shows that get created. That was very attractive for us.

Amazon says it won’t report box office numbers on some of its films. How does less transparency affect you?

We’d always prefer more transparency, but maybe not from

the perspective you’re thinking of. For us, when you’re talking about a theatrical film, you have box office around the world. When we’re constructing and developing a title, we’re building and packaging it in a way that we think will be reflective of the value we need to generate. Not knowing what is working on streaming platforms and to what extent makes it a challenge because we don’t know how to do that. We can watch and we can get some sense of it, but I’d rather know if an actor is really valuable

on any particular platform before I cast that role, not after I cast it.

The international sales business was built on indie distributors, but is it possible to release a big title these days without a major studio and its marketing machine?

One hundred percent. We sold *355*, a hugely expensive movie, and the international independent community stepped up aggressively and will do a great job distributing the film.

What went on behind the scenes to ensure that *355* stayed on schedule after Fan Bingbing went missing?

In the media, you read about all these dramatic issues and the film was teetering, but, in fact, it never really was like that. When we sold it in Cannes, it wasn’t supposed to be shooting until a year after that. And I think all of that time let everyone speculate that there were problems, but it was right on schedule. It really was no different than any other movie except that we’d wake up on occasion and read about the movie having troubles in the press when we knew it wasn’t really the case.

Will *355* get a China release?

We will see. I hope so. It would be great if it did, and I think that audiences in China would really respond to the movie.

Interview edited for length and clarity.

A TRIO OF GOTHAM TRIBUTES

Besides honoring the best in indie film, the event will fete these talents



LAURA DERN

The Big Little Lies, *Marriage Story* and *Little Women* star will receive the actress award.



AVA DUVERNAY

The director award will go to the *Selma* helmer, whose limited series, *When They See Us*, earned 16 Emmy noms.



SAM ROCKWELL

The actor award honoree, who won an Oscar for *Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri*, stars in *Jojo Rabbit*.

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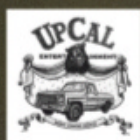
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90 Years of *THR*

Memorable moments
from a storied history



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Murder by Death Was an All-Star Mystery Spoof

In 1976, *The Hollywood Reporter* said Columbia's *Murder by Death* was part of a film genre offering "a stellar cast of familiar faces; a light, whimsical script and competent, unelaborated direction, all backed up by thoroughly professional production craftsmanship." *THR* went on to note that in the 1930s this would have been considered "routine," and it was a sign of Hollywood's decay that anything so run-of-the-mill as *Murder by Death* would be considered one of the year's best films. When *Knives Out* opens Nov. 27, critics might be saying the same about the Lionsgate/MRC release. Both are comic murder whodunits with an odd crew of suspects — played by a

roster of big-name movie stars — who have been drawn to a mansion where the host is found murdered and the killer must be uncovered. But *Death* is more a parody of the genre; its premise is that famous detectives compete with one another to solve the crime. Written by Neil Simon and directed by Robert Moore, it features Peter Sellers playing a version of Charlie Chan on a level of political incorrectness never to be achieved again; Peter Falk as a Sam Spade type; David Niven and Maggie Smith mimicking Nick and Nora Charles types; James Coco portraying a sort of Hercule Poirot; and Elsa Lanchester emulating Miss Marple. The corpse at the center of it all belongs to

the gathering's host, played by Truman Capote. James Cromwell, who at 36 had his first film role in *Murder by Death* as a chauffeur, says the famed author of *In Cold Blood* was in an awkward position on set. "Truman had once written something about actors being like trained seals," says Cromwell. "And we were basically all in the same room for 11 weeks." One critic said Capote came off "looking like an actor doing an imitation of Truman Capote," but he did receive a Golden Globe nomination for best male acting debut. As for *Death*, it did well enough (it grossed \$32.5 million, or \$150 million today) that a follow-up, *The Cheap Detective*, with Falk, Simon and Moore returning,

was made in 1978. As for Capote's acting career, he followed with *Annie Hall* in 1977. It's a blink-and-you-miss-it appearance in which Woody Allen's Alvy Singer remarks of a man strolling in Central Park, "There's the winner of the Truman Capote look-alike contest." It was, of course, the real Capote. He died in 1984 of liver disease at age 59. — BILL HIGGINS



From left: Richard Narita, Eileen Brennan, James Cromwell, James Coco, Elsa Lanchester, Estelle Winwood, Peter Falk, David Niven and Maggie Smith. Right: An ad ran in *THR* on July 2, 1976.

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